LIGHT *on the* LAST DAYS

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Being Familiar Talks on
the Book of Revelation

By

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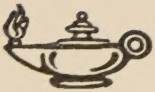

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To
Miss Emma Dryer
the friend who first opened my mind
to the
Dispensational Teaching of the Word of God
this little book is gratefully dedicated

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PREFACE

For many years "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him," and which He certified to the Apostle John by an angel, was to me a sealed book. Texts scattered here and there about the book were inspiring and helpful, but I had no comprehensive idea as to what the book was about or what it was intended to accomplish for the people of God. After years of thought and study, some definite conclusions respecting this book have been formed which to me seem true and important. It is proposed to follow these views with God's people in this volume.

I have no ambition to write a big book nor to write a learned book. It is my desire to write with the Holy Spirit as teacher, a true book and a usable book. The Revelation which, as I have already said, for many years conveyed nothing definite to my mind as to plan, scope and teaching has come to be a very blessed and helpful portion of the Word of God.

I am ashamed to think of the manner in which in former years it was neglected. I wish that now I understood it more perfectly than I do, but am grateful to God, who is loving and patient with His children, that I have attained to so much knowledge concerning its blessed teaching as I have, through His Spirit imparted.

The writing is intended to be strictly constructive and in no sense controversial. If views are mentioned which seem to me untrue it will not be for the purpose of refu-

tation, but for the purpose of bringing what I believe to be the truth into greater light by contrast.

The question will doubtless arise in the minds of my readers: "Why should we have another book, large or small, on the Revelation?" This question has occurred to me. Of course anyone who proposes to write a book must, in some way, justify his action to himself if he fails to justify it to other people.

This book is written, in the first place, because of my years of ignorance. I first read the Bible through in course when I was fifteen years old and have since read it through many times. I do not know how many, probably not less than thirty or forty times. We read the Bible by course in family worship. have always done so since we had a home. I was raised in the church.

When so small a boy that I could not keep awake evenings, I was taken to prayer meeting. We never raised the question as to whether we should go to church on the Sabbath or to Sunday-school. From the time that the children in my father's home were babes, we were all taken regularly on the Sabbath day into the house of God. I have heard good preaching all my life and what is somewhat different, the preaching of good men, for good men are not always good preachers, but I have had the privilege of listening to good preachers who were also good men.

I believe I have never heard five sermons on the Revelation in my life. I would not say that I have not for one may easily forget; but I cannot recall so many, and most of the sermons that I have heard preached on this book I have listened to within the last few years.

This Ignorance of the Book Justified

Not only have the good men and women with whom I have associated neglected this book, but they have very largely justified this neglect. They have apparently felt,

some of them have openly said, that the book was so involved, so obscure, that no one could understand it and that it really did not make any difference what the book meant, so they have confined themselves to the teaching and preaching of morals.

They have dealt with almost all portions of the Word of God except this. This treatment of a portion of the Word of God seems to me both disrespectful and dangerous. I shared in it myself for years, a fact which is confessed with shame and regret. I wish to do what I can to apologize and atone for the past.

A Greatly Needed Book

Moreover, I believe that the church in this age sorely needs the teaching of this book,—needs it for guidance, for comfort and for warning. We are approaching the times with which this book particularly deals. We have no right to be indifferent about it. God has written these words for the help of His people in all ages since they were written, but they are of special importance to us and those who succeed us.

Still further, I have found that God's people in our time are greatly interested in this book. I have seldom preached on it without having friends ask me if the sermons were in print. This shows that the heart of man answers in this case, as in all other cases, to the Word of God. Joseph Cook used to say: "God builds no half hinges. When He creates a demand He always makes a supply." My experience with my fellow Christians justifies this remark and shows that people really feel their need of this book, as we should expect them to do, since God has written it for them.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Again, the very title of this book seems to constitute a challenge to Christian intelligence and faith. It is *the*

revelation of Jesus Christ. One may say: "Is not the whole Bible *a* revelation of Jesus Christ?" and we must answer, "Yes, it is," but here is one book which is especially declared to be *the* revelation of Jesus Christ, and this must give us our first chapter, to which we pass at this time.

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I

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

AS already said, there are a number of revelations of Jesus Christ. The universe itself reveals His wisdom and power. The Holy Spirit declares that it was through Him that God made the worlds (Hebrews 1:2). "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Psalm 19:1-4).

In the leaf, in the star, in the cyclone, and in the evening zephyr we have alike, revelations of the power and wisdom and love and goodness of God, who is manifest to us in Jesus Christ. So also history is a revealer of Jesus Christ. The whole world has from the beginning until now believed in God and has been afraid and has longed for His loving favor.

But the whole world has never believed in Jesus Christ; the whole world has not yet heard of Jesus Christ, and the homes, cities and nations where Jesus Christ is believed in and worshipped as Immanuel (God with us) show what kind of person He is. You know the character of a man when you see how he affects others. This is one of the safest and most decisive methods of judgment.

There is not a country community in the world where fathers and mothers teach their children of the gentle

Jesus which is not transformed in character by the teaching. I, myself, have been in communities in our own land and in other lands where Jesus Christ was not known and I have also been in communities where He was known and I can personally testify to this truth, that the story of the nations reveals the character of Jesus Christ.

The Witnesses a Host

And if my own testimony should be rejected as incompetent, there are a million witnesses who might be summoned. There will be no break in their testimony. What faith in Jesus Christ does in Asia, in Africa, in Europe, in the United States, it does in the islands of the sea. What it does for the rich and powerful, it does for the poor and ignorant. The story of the nations reveals the character of Jesus Christ.

The whole Bible is an unveiling of Jesus Christ. It begins with sinless people in a fair and beautiful garden. It tells the awful story of the incoming of sin. It records at once the promise of a Saviour. It gives us through the long, weary years the terrible record of the ruin which sin has wrought, and it gives us through the long, beautiful years the delightful record of what faith in God through Jesus Christ has wrought.

It comes down to the day of His birth and the day of His death. It tells the story of the founding of His churches, the victorious march of His disciples. But at last it comes to this book which is the object of our thought, and while all the time we have been experiencing revelations of Jesus Christ, we have here *the* revelation of Jesus Christ; that is to say, more than anywhere else in literature, here is found the description of the character and work of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Not a Revelation but the Revelation

The fact that this is the summit and crown of the unveilings of Jesus Christ to the eyes and hearts of men does not go to show that the other unveilings are unimportant. Nothing which concerns Him is unimportant and the Holy Spirit uses language carefully. He does not say "the" when He means "a" or "an"; when He says "the" He means "the" and He calls this *"the"* Revelation of Jesus Christ. So as we begin this book we should remember that God has especially dignified the word, upon the study of which we enter.

He not only calls it the Revelation of Jesus Christ but He says that God gave this revelation to Jesus Christ and that Jesus Christ sent and signified it by an angel to His servant John. We should be warned by such an august word against careless and irreverent dealing. The entire Book of God is sacred.

It is not safe for men to neglect, to despise, to ignore or to dispute any portion of it, but out of this whole library there is no one book which should be approached with more reverent mind, more humble heart, more continued crying for teaching than this one. Here as no where else in revelation do we seem to hear the word of God, "Put thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

Contempt of Court

Human courts are accustomed to punish those who treat them with disrespect. In many instances judges are apparently more anxious to be respected than they are to be respectable, they are more determined to avoid contempt than they are to avoid practices which are contemptible. It is one of the hopeful signs of our times that the common people are insisting upon a change in this respect. It is self-evident that when courts are truly

ney will ordinarily be treated with respect, do not deserve contempt they will seldom perience it, but drunken, covetous, ignorant, udges will not in the future, as in the past, be nelter themselves from proper detestation by [illegible] men for despising them, when they deserve to be despised. I have been led to this remark by thinking of the manner in which the portion of God's Word concerning which we are writing has been treated by many professed Christians and by most of those who do not have the Christian faith.

Suppose the Bible to have ended with the Epistle of Jude, would not every thoughtful man and woman have said: "What is the conclusion of this struggle, what is the end of this church? We have here an imperfect production, a beginning and a middle but there is no end." When, however, we turn to the magnificient imagery and utterances of the Revelation we feel that we have reached a conclusion. There is a summing up of the whole matter and we feel that this record is complete. If we have realized in some small way the character of the age-long struggle which has gone forward, and the needs of the church, we join in the prayer of the revelator, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Another Important Consideration

There is perhaps, no disrespect more serious than to neglect to give attention to the words which God has spoken for the enlightenment of His people. Over and again I have heard men say that they have no idea what the Revelation is about, that it is to them dead, so far as meaning and life are concerned. These expressions are usually given as an excuse for neglect. The fact of ignorance is stated as an excuse for it, that is, because persons do not know anything about the book they do not

try to know anything about it. It is obvious that so long as the cause remains, the effect will continue.

Turn now to the beginning of this tremendous conclusion of the verbal revelation of God: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, * * * and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John," * * * after which, God pronounces a blessing upon the persons who read, the persons who hear and the persons who attend to that which is written.

I believe in the inspiration of every book in the Bible. I believe that for His own purposes of mercy, God has preserved this long record which He caused to be made, but is it not remarkable that the only book which He declares Himself to have personally given is the one selected out of all the rest to be set aside and ignored as unintelligible or unimportant? When God has taken pains to pronounce a blessing upon those who read, upon those who hear, and upon those who give attention to the things which He writes in a book, men respond by saying, sometimes in words, more frequently by action, that they know nothing about this book, and that they do not care to know anything about it, and that they will not listen to or obey it. Was there ever a contempt of court like this?

The Practical Value of the Book

Before I understood in any measure the teaching of the Word of God respecting the second coming of our Lord, a friend asked me if I would be willing to examine the teaching of the Scripture respecting that great and sadly neglected subject. I replied that I would; a time was fixed and we met with our Bibles for the study.

Before beginning the examination, I said to my friend: "There is one preliminary question which I would like to ask before we begin this study. What is the practical

value of the doctrine of the pre-millennial coming of our Lord?" My friend paused, as if in prayer, and replied: "I suppose if the doctrine is in the Word of God, it has a practical value."

This remark threw a flood of light upon the whole matter of Biblical study. It is unquestionably true that if a doctrine is in the Word of God, it has a practical value. To say that the Bible contains nonsensical or unintelligible teaching is a gross and inexcusable contempt of court. If judges even such as we have now, who are often defiled with liquor and tobacco and sometimes live unclean lives in other respects, who bargain and buy and sell that they may be elected or re-elected, men who are profane and greedy, if such men would fine and imprison a man who dared to talk to them in this fashion, how much more will God, the infinitely pure and Holy One allow men to reap terribly if they dare to trifle with a record like this.

In whatever sense it is taken, the Revelation of Jesus Christ is not a foolish or unreasonable matter. No Christian man or woman has a right to think of it or speak of it or act in reference to it as if it were a weak, unimportant thing. When God takes pains to give a revelation to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ commits it to His angel to be conveyed to His servant John, and when John is especially directed to write this revelation for the information and guidance of God's people, and when God pronounces a blessing upon those who read and those who hear and those who obey, we are dealing with a matter of most serious import and we are fools and blind if we treat it as if it were not so.

II

THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK

(Chapter 1)

IT has been a source of regret to many humble souls that we have no authentic portrait of Jesus Christ in His humiliation. It is only one of a thousand proofs for the divine character of the Word that nothing is said respecting His personal appearance. When we consider who He was, whom His disciples believed Him to be, what they declared concerning Him, this reticence seems marvelous.

These four disciples who walked with Him in intimate companionship, who loved Him so truly that they laid down their lives for His sake, do not tell us whether He was tall or short, slight or fleshy, light or dark, brown-eyed, black-eyed, blue-eyed,—about it all they tell us nothing. The prophets give a hint, "He was a man of sorrows," "His face was marred."

One of the evangelists gives us a slight suggestion. He records that His enemies said: "Thou art not yet fifty years of age." Why should they have said to a man just turned thirty that He was not yet fifty? As I have remarked, this is a suggestion only, but it is a weighty suggestion. The verse ends with the word of the prophet that His visage was marred, that He was a man of sorrows. You do not frequently say to a man just past thirty, "Thou are not yet fifty," but we have in the gospels and here in the beginning of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, a description of His appearance in the glory.

One of the Holy Mountains

On the Mount of Transfiguration He appeared blazing in light as to His face and as to His clothing, the humble seamless coat, the gift of pious women who loved Him then as they have loved Him ever since, was transfigured as well as His countenance. The celestial glory shone from Him through eyes and face and garments until His disciples, who knew Him well and had sometimes not honored Him as they ought, fell upon their faces in reverence and fear.

This single outflash of the divine, which we have recorded as an incident in His career of humiliation, is shown to be the permanent characteristic of His present state. When John heard the mighty voice, he turned to see the One who had spoken to him and saw the majestic figure of his Saviour, His face shining like the sun, His eyes blazing like the fire, His garments shining and white like no earthly whiteness; His girdle of gold, His hair seeming to radiate electric flashes, His feet even, like brass blazing in a furnace. This is the startling figure which appeared to John; His word killed and made alive, a sword proceeded out of His mouth. One of the hymns which they used to sing when I was a boy had in it a verse like this:

> "Oh, show me not my Saviour dying,
> As on the cross He bled;
> Nor in the tomb a captive lying,
> For He has left the dead.
> Then bid me not that form extended
> For my Redeemer own,
> Who to the highest heavens ascended
> In glory fills the throne."

This word of the poet is neither strange nor unfitting, for Jesus Christ will never again appear in the body of His humiliation; men will never again buffet Him, men will never again spit upon Him, men will never again tie

His sacred hands, men will never again lay the scourge across His shoulders. He is in the glory of His resurrection body, He has sat down with His Father in His Father's throne, as we shall one day sit with Him in His throne. This august and mighty figure, the center of the uncounted hosts of angels and saints, the companion and fellow ruler with God Almighty, is the One who is revealed and the One who conveys the revelation by His angel to His servant John, He is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

III

THE TIMES AND SCOPE OF THE REVELATION

(Chapters 1-22)

THERE is not space in a work such as I intend this to be, short and for the help of busy people who desire to get at the heart of this book and not to lose themselves in a multiplicity of details, to give the various views which good and great men have held respecting the subject of this chapter. I must content myself with stating as clearly as I may the opinions which I have formed, and will attempt in this chapter to give to the earnest Bible student who wishes to know with what time in the history of the human race this book deals, a brief, clear, and as God shall help, an accurate statement regarding that matter.

The historic setting is obvious. John was in the island which is called Patmos, a prisoner of Jesus Christ. In this desert island he saw the revelator of whom I have spoken so briefly and imperfectly in the last chapter, and after coming into conversation with him he was directed to write the things which he had seen, the things which were at that time happening and the things which were to come hereafter.

There seems to be very little concerning the past in this writing. No mention of Moses, of Abraham, or the patriarchs or of the prophets, but after this glance at the revelator in his present exalted state, we pass at once to his letters to the churches. The churches had

been in existence, we may say in a rough way, for seventy years. No one would pretend that in their beginnings they had attained to the fixed character which they have assumed, but from the ascension of Jesus Christ, His people like frightened flocks of sheep gathered as they were permitted, to worship and to comfort themselves with the thought of what He was, of what He had done and of what He was yet to do.

The Seven Letters

These letters to the churches proceed through the first series of seven which we have in this book. Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, each in turn receives its message and when the message to Laodicea is ended the revelator says: "Behold, I stand at the door."

There is very general agreement among Bible students, and it is my own opinion, that in these two chapters, the second and the third, we have a picture of the things that had been, the things that were and the things that were to come in the life of the church between the ascension of Jesus Christ from Olivet and His coming again to Olivet to assume the kingdoms of the earth.

In a word, we have here a picture of the life of the church from Pentecost to the second coming of our Lord, and this brief yet vivid picture of the church age ends with the third chapter.

What will follow the church age? Evidently in some form or other the time of the tribulation. Why must the time of tribulation follow the church age? Because when the church has been withdrawn, while Satan, godless governments and Christless religions remain in the world there *must be* tribulation, and such a time of tribulation as the world has never known in the mixed state which has been from the beginning until now.

From the fourth chapter through the nineteenth,

speaking generally, there seems to be an account of this time of trouble. We have an introduction to the convulsions and overturning in the fourth and fifth chapters. Jesus Christ appears as the central figure in the heavenly kingdom. God the Father is there; the four living beings who represent the redeemed creation are there; the twenty-four elders who represent the church universal are there, and ranged around, now more and now less in evidence, are angels and saints in countless myriads of millions.

The Seven-Sealed Book

This is the setting. The question which arises is respecting a book, the contents of which are carefully sealed from the sight of all. There are seven seals, that is to say, the concealment is perfect. No one can know what there is in this book, yet there is a desire to know what there is in it and some person is sought who may be able to open it, but no one is found until Jesus Christ stands forth as able and willing to perform this duty.

He appears as a lamb, as a slain lamb, and yet He is termed a lion, a lion of the tribe of Judah. Seal after seal is opened, trumpet after trumpet is blown, bowl after bowl is poured out and all the time judgments are falling upon the world, the world which has rejected Jesus Christ, the world from which Jesus Christ has withdrawn and from which He has also withdrawn His church so that Satan and wicked governments and Christless religions possess it for themselves.

Upon this world these judgments are poured out and they are poured out as the book is opened, that is to say, as the contents of the book are made accessible to men, judgments fall on the earth. It is for this reason that I am led to call this book the "Book of Judgments."

Finally the awful series is ended; fire and hail on the

earth, burning mountains cast into the sea, wormwood mingled with the rivers and fountains of water, disorganization in the sun and stars, direct inflictions of penalties from above and the opening of the bottomless pit, that infernal agents may come forth in millions to torment men who have rejected Jesus Christ, all these things are over and gone. The beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire, and now we come to another section of this revelation.

The Binding of the Dragon

We have not to do with the judgments which are to fall upon a Christ-rejecting world, they are concluded; we have not to do with the beast or the false prophet, they are in the lake of fire, but the dragon who has been the author and instigator of these agencies of sin and consequent sufferings is still alive and at large.

He is not to remain alive and at large. An angel flashes down from the skies and lays hold upon him. He binds him with a great chain and shuts him up in the bottomless pit and seals the gate that he may not come forth, and gives the world a respite of a thousand years.

A thousand years of peace, a thousand years of, at least, apparent holiness, a thousand years of freedom from the sickness and suffering and multiplied miseries which sin has always caused. It is the golden age of the world. Not the age of innocence, but the age of virtue; not the age of our sinless fathers, but the age of our sin-curing Brother.

This is the age to which we look when Christ and His people will reign on the earth a thousand years. There is a mysterious incident connected with the close of this thousand years. How can it be that after a thousand years of peace and righteousness, of consequent happiness and prosperity there should be one person in all the

world who would be willing to follow that dark and malignant being who will then emerge from his prison-house and seek to deceive the nations for a time.

The revelation here is in shadow. The unveiling of Jesus Christ seems perfect but the unveiling of Satan is not perfect and the unveiling of Satan's followers is not perfect, so we must content ourselves with faith where we are not permitted knowledge. It is easy to believe what we cannot fully understand.

The Lake of Fire

Suffice it to say that this revival of Satanic power is very short and that at its close Satan also is cast into the lake of fire, as the beast and the false prophet were a thousand years before, and with him are cast into the lake of fire his followers and friends, the persons who dared even after the thousand years of the blessed reign of Jesus and His saints to rise in rebellion against Him.

And now we have come to the last section of this wonderful unveiling of Jesus Christ, and here again we must remember that the unveiling of Jesus Christ is one thing and the unveiling of all the facts connected with Him is another thing; for example, in this wonderful city, New Jerusalem which comes down from God out of heaven, adorned with all possible splendors and inhabited by uncounted hosts of sinless and happy beings, Jesus Christ will reign—this glorious Being whom we saw set forth in the first chapter of this book, we find in the last chapter exercising supreme power in this holy city.

What is this holy city? It is an abode of the saints and angels, the holy nations bring their glory and honor into it. Is it on the earth or near the earth? We cannot tell. It comes down from God out of heaven. If it comes to the earth, well and good. It will be a part of that new earth in which righteousness is to dwell. If it comes near the earth but not to the earth, equally well.

We ourselves shall have been in our resurrection bodies for more than a thousand years. The sinless angels have never been hampered by material temples such as we occupy and it is evident that the saved nations will come and go through the wonderful streets and palaces of this magnificent city as freely as do the angels who have never sinned.

The story of the church age ends with the word of the Saviour King: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," and the story of the unveiling of Jesus Christ ends with the thrice-repeated statement: "Behold, I am coming quickly." Does not the heart of everyone who reads these words echo the prayer of that great Elder Brother of ours, who received and passed on this revelation and who having heard this thrice-repeated promise of a speedy advent, said: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

IV

THE TIMES AND SCOPE OF THE REVELATION—(CONTINUED)

(Chapters 1-22)

THUS far we have seen that "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him," is the sole prophetic book in the New Testament. We have seen that it naturally ends the revelation which God gave to His people. It brings us to the end of sin and the triumph of holiness and reëstablishment of the paradise of God. The thorns and thistles have passed away. The wild beasts of the earth have lost their malignant dispositions. A little child can lead the lion or the bear. It is true that these particular images are found in the Old Testament prophecy but the time of the realization is evidently in the age of this book.

We have seen that it includes a backward glance at things that have preceded, a present survey of the things which were in the time of the writer, and a forward look to the thing which were yet to be. When the events covered in this writing are concluded there will be a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness alone will dwell. We have found that the letters to the churches conclude the story of the church age, and that the fourth chapter gives us a vision of the church resting from the labors and conflicts of the long war.

The Book of Judgments

In the midst of this glorious and awe-inspiring vision the throne of God is surrounded by the representatives

of the universal church together with the four living creatures who image or signify the redeemed creation or the spiritual forces of the redeemed creation, and we have the vision of the sealed book.

The number seven, as all know, signifies perfection. The seven spirits of God represent the perfect spiritual power of God; the seven seals represent the covering which is complete, so that the contents of the book were entirely secured, made safe from inspection; and probably also they signify not only that the sealing is complete as to contents but that it is perfect as to power. No one was found able to open these seals and to reveal the contents of the book.

In the midst of this vast and resplendent company the eyes of the revelator were filled with tears because no one was found worthy to open the book; not even to look upon it. But finally he was told that the Lion of the tribe of Judah could open the book, and looking to see the Lion of the tribe of Judah, he saw a lamb as if it had been slain.

We cannot dwell upon this wonderful scene but remind you that suffering gentleness has always been the most powerful force in the history of the world. The lion was a lamb that was slain, and this slain lamb alone had power to break these seals and reveal to the hosts of heaven and the church gathered from all lands and the entire church age the secrets recorded in the book.

The Seals, Trumpets and Vials

A large part of the book from this point has to do with the opening of the seals, the sounding of the trumpets and the pouring of the vials. Every seal broken, every trumpet sounded, every vial poured out is followed by judgments, thunderings, lightnings, earthquakes, pestilences and ruin; all these things attend the breaking of the seals. It seems therefore clear that this

book contained a revelation of the disasters which were to come upon the earth at the close of the church age before the reign of Christ had begun.

The Seven Years of Judgment

All students of the last things have noticed that there seem to be at least two special comings of our Lord included under the term "last days." He comes *for* His saints and He comes *with* His saints. We must not dogmatize, we must not criticise, but we must judge as well as we may respecting these two events and the time which separates them. Apparently they are entirely distinct in their character and purpose.

He comes for His church; the sleeping saints are raised and the waking saints are changed. They pass away together. The saints, glorified and happy, are to be forever with their Lord, and we are told to comfort each other with these words. He comes with His saints, by the brightness of His appearing to destroy His enemies. This seems to be a different errand, accompanied by very different events. Certainly to gather His saints and to destroy His enemies are not the same thing.

The two movements might occur at the same time but the manner in which they are recorded seems to intimate a period of separation. The teaching of the Prophet Daniel as to the weeks fits in with this thought. Sixty-nine weeks seem accounted for in the history of the world thus far but the seventieth week does not appear as yet to have its place. Is this its time? If so, then this period between the coming of our Lord for His people and the coming of our Lord with His people for the destroying of His enemies would seem to cover a period of seven years. This, I think, is so justified by all the teaching that we may assume it to be proved. The division of the last week into the periods of three

and one-half days representing three and one-half years is not so clear as the teaching regarding the week as a whole, but this also has its place and significance.

The Last Week of Daniel

If we are not mistaken in interpreting thus far we have, between the coming of our Lord for the calling of the church and the coming of our Lord with His saints for the destruction of malignant and persecuting enemies, these seven years of judgment, and the description of this seven years is to be found in this book which was sealed with seven seals.

The obvious teaching of this passage seems to be that the punishments which were to fall on the sinful world when the church had been withdrawn, and the whole world was left to the power of the dragon and beast and the false prophet, were hidden from the universe and could not be manifested until the Lion of the tribe of Judah broke the seals of this book.

As seal after seal was broken, punishment after punishment was made known, and when the last vial was emptied the awful judgments on a godless world were concluded.

Judgments Natural, Not Arbitrary

All thoughtful people have observed that punishments in the plan of God are usually natural and not arbitrary. That is to say, they grow out of the transgressions which are punished and are not miseries and torments dragged in by some powerful and merciless Being. The headache, the bleared eyes, the bloated face of the drunkard are the natural results of his drunkenness. The laws of his being notify him in advance that if he sins in that way he will have to suffer in that way, and what is true in this particular instance is true in all other cases.

I mention this fact to say that any person who reflects will see at once that this week intervening between the church age and the millennial reign of Jesus Christ must be a time of sorrows, shames, miseries, and terrors. The world during this period seems to be absolutely delivered over to the powers of the prince of darkness. Undoubtedly God retains His superintending rights. We cannot think of Him as abandoning any part of the universe which He had created. The wrath of man always praises Him, always will praise Him. When there is a remainder of wrath which would not praise Him He will restrain it. This is the law of His house.

But apparently He intends to give the universe a sight of what unrestrained evil will do and so He withdraws the church which has been persecuted, and ignored and sneered at and neglected by godless people over the world. He allows Satan and the beast and the false prophet unrestrained sway and He allows men to experience and the universe to behold the natural results of such a state of things.

The Ruin of Satan, Then the Kingdom of Christ

These judgments, as I have said, continue through the opening of the seals, the sounding of the trumpets and emptying of the vials. After this time of judgment is concluded we have the story of the setting up of the kingdom of Jesus Christ here in this world. In the nineteenth chapter the beast and the false prophet and those that follow them are cast into the lake of fire. In the twentieth chapter Satan, the dragon, is bound and chained in the pit for a thousand years, and during that thousand years our Lord and His saints reign in the earth.

At the end of that thousand years the tenth verse of the twentieth chapter tells us that the devil also is cast

into the lake of fire; that all those who have rejected life are also cast into the lake of fire, and then in the twenty-first and the twenty-second chapters we have a picture of the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness shall dwell.

We have therefore, in this book divisions like these: First, the vision of Jesus Christ, chapter one; second, Christ's message to the churches, the story of the church age, chapters two and three; third, the vision of the church in the heavenlies, chapter four; fourth, the revelation of the judgments of the seven years during which evil will reign in the world, chapters five to nineteen; fifth, a vision of the reign of Christ on the throne with His saints, chapters nineteen and twenty; and finally a picture of the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness shall dwell, chapters twenty-one and twenty-two.

The Mysterious Book

Is it strange that Satan should have done his best to prevent the church from apprehending and rejoicing in such a revelation as this? Mr. Moody used to say that Revelation was the one book in the Bible which told about the devil's being cast into the lake of fire. He said: "The devil does not wish people to know where he is to go, and therefore he tells them that they cannot understand the book in which his fate is described."

This seems very natural, but is it not strange that the saints of God should have listened to Satan in this particular; that they should have neglected this book, the only one which has its divine origin so clearly affirmed, which promises such blessing upon those who read, upon those who hear, upon those who obey; and which gives us the triumphant termination of the age-long war between good and evil, light and darkness, God and Satan?

Is it not strange, I say, that the church has so neglected this book! Ought we not to pray God to graciously enlighten our own eyes that we may read and understand and obey and receive the blessing which was promised?

V

"A BUNCH OF LOVE LETTERS"

(Chapters 2 and 3)

I DO not remember who it was that first named the letters to the churches in this way, but it seemed to me a very beautiful thing thus to call them, and now when I think of them they appear to me under this title. I desire in this chapter to do two things: First, to characterize briefly these seven letters as a whole, and, second, to speak of the periods in the church age which they individually and collectively represent.

And first as to their general characteristics: The writer would have us remember that these are the last words which Jesus Christ has spoken to His church. Each of them begins with a claim to full and complete knowledge, "I know thy works," "I know thy works," "I know thy works." This solemn affirmation echoes and re-echoes from letter to letter as it also echoes and re-echoes from age to age.

"Thy Works," "Thy Trouble," "Thy Home"

There is, however, a very beautiful variation, or amplification in the second and third letters. Smyrna was not a working church but a suffering church, and although in some translations we have in the Word, "I know thy works," we have more distinctly set forth, "I know thy trouble." And the church of Pergamos, which dwelt in the midst of powerful evil forces that were seeking to drag it down, has also this beautiful expression, "I know where thou dost dwell."

As I was preaching on this subject recently these thoughts filled my mind with a wonderful comfort, a light and a blessing. I believe they will be in like manner helpful to many to whom this word may come. Jesus Christ speaking to His people says: "I know what you do, I know what you suffer and I know where you live." He does not content Himself with saying, "I know thy works," for this, though in many instances it may bring consolation, in many other instances is a word of fear. But interpreted in the light of the two following expressions the fears are softened and the comfort predominates, for it is just as true that Jesus knows what His people suffer and that He knows where His people dwell as it is that He knows what they have done.

Jesus Takes All into Account

And it is also true that He judges what they have done in connection with what they have suffered and with the surroundings which have helped or hindered them in the divine life, and so I would say for the comfort of all God's people who begin this chapter, that we may be glad that He says in the first place, "I know about your works and I know about your trials, the trials which arise from your own natures, the trials which arise from the solicitations of evil and wicked people about you, or from the unkindness of evil and wicked people about you, and the trials which arise from the direct assault and suggestion of Satan and his demon hosts."

"I know what thou dost suffer and I know where thou dost dwell,"—in a home with unconverted people, in a home with needy, suffering, irritable, troublesome people, I know where thou dost dwell. I have made provision for all the circumstances of thy abode just as I have made provision for all thy sins. The temptations which

will arise from your dwelling are quite as much in my knowledge and in my plan as the temptations which arise from any other source," and so the people of God may be glad when they read this bunch of love letters to think that this One of the shining face and the flashing eyes does not use His power of vision to terrify and destroy, but to warn, to comfort and console.

If only we are able with a measure of humble faith to say as Peter did when the thrice-repeated question burned into his very heart: "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," we may then be sure that this One who holds the stars in His right hand and walks among the candle-sticks, observing with His penetrating glance all that we do, knows not only what we do but what we endure and what we must meet in the places where we dwell and judges us kindly and compassionately as a father and a Saviour, not as a tyrant and a heartless Lord.

The Joy of Commendation

Another characteristic which runs throughout this entire series is the evident joy which this all-knowing Saviour King has in commending the honest efforts of His churches to be and to do according to His will. It seems as letter after letter is unfolded that He is not willing to allow a single good thing which any of those churches, weak and imperfect like ourselves, have done to go unmentioned. "I know thy works, I know thy sufferings, I know thy persecutions, I know thy faith, I know thy zeal."

Over and again He records all the good things which He is able to say concerning His churches. We humans are prompt to criticise and some of us are prompt to praise and those who criticise unfavorably seldom praise, and those who praise oftentimes lack either courage or faithfulness to warn, but this great Captain is equal to

both these seeming contradictions. He sets forth with a loving heart and with a glorious fidelity both the good and the evil which He finds in His people.

A Rare Proof of Friendship

I remember to have heard a man once say concerning my father: "He furnished this rare proof of friendship, that he was able and willing to reprove his friends." This same characteristic we find throughout these letters. While the One of the flaming eyes is not willing that any effort for holiness should go unmentioned, He is also unwilling that any dangerous, lurking sin or toleration of sin should be unreproved.

"You have followers of Balaam among you. You have certain followers of Jezebel among you and you tolerate them, you do not reprove them, you do not cast them out and they are corrupting you and corrupting others. You must be faithful and not simply avoid evil yourselves, but you must not tolerate evil. If you tolerate evil it will destroy you, it is as if you yourself should do it." This is a wonderful thing and is a marked characteristic of this series of letters.

Another fact which we find set forth in each one of them is that there is opportunity and place for change: "Be zealous, and repent," comes into most of them, Smyrna and Philadelphia perhaps the only exceptions. And this in connection with the warning and with the declaration of sin and failure is also a word of comfort. Next to the shame and terror of sin comes the fear that repentance is impossible, that the hope of pardon is past.

But over and again we find this One who walks among the churches and who upholds their messengers with His right hand, urges upon them repentance and this shows that repentance and pardon are not yet beyond reach.

The Hope of Victory

And once more we find in each one of these letters the possibility of victory and reward: "He that overcometh," "he that overcometh," "he that overcometh"; —Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea—"he that overcometh," "he that overcometh." Even Laodicea has this same hint of possible victory and in each case there is joined to the possibility of victory the certainty of reward. "He that overcometh to him I will give—." "He that overcometh to him will I give." "He that overcometh to him I will give—."

How like the blessed bells of hope these words ring through the hearts of men! We are known thoroughly as to our works, as to our tribulations and as to our dwellings and as to our failures and as to our efforts and as to our utter inabilities. But it is possible that we should overcome and if we overcome then we shall have the new name, then we shall have the new place, and we shall have the abundant reward. And finally, at the close of each one of these loving words of Jesus Christ to His people, we have this solemn expression: "Let the one who has ears to hear, listen."

Who Are the Seven Churches?

I pass now to the question, "What particular churches are represented, if any, by this group of letters addressed to the seven congregations named?" and I remark, in the first place, that it was probably intended as a special message for the particular churches indicated. John himself had been the pastor at Ephesus and the other six churches which he names were grouped in a small circle about that ancient and magnificent city. It would have been perfectly possible to have committed the messages to John for one church in Asia Minor, another in Macedonia, a third in Greece, a fourth in Rome and the

like, but for some reason Jesus Christ pleased to send this message to Ephesus, John's own church, and to these other churches which were near to it.

And there is no doubt but that there was a special appropriateness in the particular message sent to each particular church, for while the messages have the general characteristics which I have named, each of them also has its peculiar word. The entire setting of this august transaction forbids us to believe that these letters were addressed to these churches for themselves alone.

There is no partiality with God, there are great similarities among His people, and He has the same interest in a church in Alaska or in Mexico that He had in a church in Greece or Asia Minor, so we must hold and teach that these letters are not alone for the seven churches to which they are addressed, but are also for all churches which have characteristics and circumstances that would make them appropriate.

Letters for All Churches in Every Age

And still further, because all churches are much alike and because in all ages all the characteristics both for good and ill which are mentioned in these letters may exist, we may believe, we must believe that these letters are, all of them, intended for every age in the life of the church.

Wherever Baalism or the worship of nature and the exaltation of the people are found as sins and faults there the message to Pergamos or Thyatira will be in order. But there is also apparently a reason for believing that there is a certain succession in church age intimated by these seven letters; for example, Ephesus was the church of John. It was in a rich and beautiful city; John himself was familiar with the walls, the palaces, the theaters, the camps, the baths, the courts of that imperial city, and it was not to be wondered at that

in that city, joined with faith and labor, there should also be a tendency to a failure in first love and so John speaks of this and it was undoubtedly a characteristic of the church in the first ages, abundant works, abundant faith, abundant sacrifice, but a tendency to self-righteousness, a temptation to magnify self and to forget their Saviour.

We Are in Danger

This seems to have been a universal tendency; we experience it ourselves today. So also Smyrna seems to have been surrounded by powerful and malignant forces and the church passed from its first age of faith and courage and hope and service into a time of deadly persecution which lasted for centuries.

Historians called them pagan persecutions and papal persecutions; call them what you like, they were the times when the disciples of Jesus Christ were hunted to the caves in the mountains and to the tombs in the plains, when every form of death which could be devised that would call forth fear and terror among men was inflicted upon the disciples of Jesus, and this was the Smyrna age that followed the age of Ephesus.

But after a time persecutions ceased. Popularity increased, the cross was blazoned on the banners of Rome; wherever the eagles of that mighty nation screamed, there the cross on which Jesus suffered was elevated and honored, and this brought in the age of Pergamos and Thyatira, a time when the church was united with the world, when it sought for the friendship and help of the mighty and powerful of the earth and did not seek the help that comes from God alone.

Backsliding and Worldliness

It would be natural that two periods like this should conduct to the time of Sardis, when the church had a name to live and was dead, when the embers seemed to

be flickering to their final extinction, and historically we find that this was the fact; that the church came to a time when ignorance, immorality and superstition were practically universal; when the love of power and the love of money ate the very heart out of the church of Jesus Christ. This was the time of the Sardis church; history reveals this age as clearly as it does the other which precedes it.

And then came the time of Philadelphia, the time when a handful separated themselves from the corruptions which had destroyed the church and Philadelphia gives us the age of the Reformation, the time of improvement in morals, in knowledge of the Word of God, in belief in that Word and an effort to live according to it, but the age of Philadelphia was succeeded by the age of Laodicea, the time when the church said: "I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing"; the time when people boast of their numbers, of their wealth, of their religious activities and do not know that they are poor and miserable and blind and naked.

No thoughtful man who reads the newspapers can doubt that we are in this age, and as we read the sad boasting of men who are in many instances themselves yoked up with a godless and wicked world, who have an outside of religion but who have a heart of greed and pride and vanity, we are reminded of our own danger and of the words of Jesus: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock."

VI

A DOOR OPENED IN HEAVEN

(Chapters 4 and 5)

THE story of the church ends with the close of these letters. The word "church" does not recur. The scenes which succeed are set in the heavens, though they have reference to some events which occur on the earth. The Bible description of the occurrences which close the church age is found in the fourth chapter of First Thessalonians, the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, etc. When the Laodicean church is entirely satisfied with herself and her surroundings, when the Balaams of the church are crying peace and safety, then in such an hour as men do not think Jesus will come.

He will not come for *all,* but for *His saints.* Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, the other left. Two men will be plowing in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left. Two will be sleeping in one bed; one will be taken, the other left. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the trumpet shall sound and the dead will be raised and the living saints will be changed. We which are alive and remain will not go before those who sleep; they will go before us.

The first resurrection will be completed before a living saint receives his resurrection body, but when those who sleep in Jesus are awakened and receive their resurrection bodies, we which are alive and remain shall also be changed. The Holy Spirit says we shall be caught

away to meet Him in the air and that so shall we ever be with the Lord, and in the harassed, tempest-tossed times of the apostle he said, writing to the people of God: "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

The Four and Twenty Elders

This period seems distinctly represented in the fourth and fifth chapters of the Revelation. John hears a great voice; he sees a door opened in heaven, the throne of God is before him; surrounding it are four and twenty thrones on which sit the four and twenty elders; four living beings are there, mighty intelligences, swift-winged with the courage of the lion, the patience of the ox, the intelligence of men and the piercing glance of the eagle.

What is signified by these four and twenty elders? Why four and twenty? Why not twenty or fifteen? Evidently because these four and twenty elders, clothed in white, sitting upon thrones, crowned with gold represent the tribes of the old dispensation and the apostles of the new. In a word, they represent the church universal and this church is not seen scattered about the hills and valleys of Asia Minor, laboring, persecuted, bewitched and lukewarm, but it is in the presence of God and is surrounded by the uncounted hosts of angels who have never sinned.

The Beasts and the Beast

The Bible is the finest specimen of book-making known to the world. It has given law to the literatures of all civilized nations. It is the standard by which they are judged and to which they do not attain. Yet the translation is a human work and must therefore be imperfect as men are imperfect. One of the notable instances of this defect is found in the word "beasts," which recurs so frequently throughout the early chapters of this work.

The student who turns to his Greek Testament finds that the word "beasts" is "zoa" in the original and "zoa" may signify beasts, but the distinctive character of the expression is "living ones." These four "beasts" are more correctly thought of as four magnificent living creatures, not beasts in the ordinary human sense of the term at all. On the other hand, the word "beast" which we find in the latter portion of this book, e. g., 19:20, is "therion." It means a lion or a bear or a leopard or a wolf, it signifies a wild beast, so that the expressions found here in the early part of this work should never be translated "beasts," but should always be read "living creatures," or "living beings."

Whom or what do these four living beings represent? Opinions differ. Each man must prayerfully study and thoughtfully determine as well as he can. To me they signify the redeemed creation in which the redeemed saints are some day to reign. It may be that they are the angelic powers who are to care for this redeemed creation. The redeemed people are no longer on the earth, they are in the heavens. The living beings who are to care for the redeemed creation are also in heaven. They have not yet taken their places upon the earth; by and by they will.

"Then instead of the briar shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the thorn shall come up the myrtle tree, and this shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." (See Isaiah, chapters 11, 35 and 55.) The earth itself is changed so that it no longer brings forth harmful vegetation, so the nature of the brute creation will be changed, the lion and the lamb, the ox and the leopard, the little child and the deadly reptile all will dwell together in peace and harmony, it is fitting that people who have been sanctified and made fit for a heavenly redemption should occupy a heavenly world.

Beastly Governments

It is an interesting fact that the nations of the world in choosing their emblematic figures have so frequently chosen birds and beasts of prey;—the Roman eagles, the Russian bear, the double-headed eagles of Austria, the lion and unicorn of Great Britain—how has it happended that such figures as these have been chosen by great nations as their graphic representations?

Doubtless because of the fact that the nations have been like wild beasts in their relations to their own subjects and in their relations to one another. They have ravenously torn and devoured. Even to this day they do the same. Consider the relation of the American government to the slaves, to the Indians, to the poor and miserable of the cities.

Consider the history of Great Britain at home, in India, in South Africa; consider the history of Spain in the eastern and western hemispheres; read the story of the nations of the earth, see the poverty, the slaughter of little children, the famines and the pestilences which have dogged the heels of wars, and it will be instantly obvious that wild beasts are the appropriate representations of such governments as these.

I have spoken of the beast because he is suggested by the expression "beasts" and not because he appears through the open doors in the skies. John does not say "the beast", he says, "living beings," powerful, intelligent, beautiful, holy in the presence of God, in the presence of Jesus Christ, in the presence of the four and twenty thrones upon which sit the four and twenty elders, robed in white and crowned with gold. This is the vision which came before John when he heard a voice like a trumpet which said: "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter."

The Book of Judgments

We have already considered the general purpose of this book; it is to reveal Jesus Christ taking possession of His kingdom through the call of His saints and the destruction of His enemies. The latter are the more prominent in this book. As the seals were opened, judgments fell upon the earth. But I wish to pause a moment here to raise this question: "Why was the Lamb slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the only one in heaven or in earth who was fitted to unveil the judgments which were to fall upon men?"

No one was found to open the book; John was weeping because no one was found; he wished to know what was included under its seven seals. It seems that the celestial universe was looking on; God the Father, the universal church, the redeemed creation, the uncounted millions of angels all were looking on, apparently to see by what method Jesus Christ was to obtain possession of His rightful kingdom, and the only one who was able to break the seals and to open the book was this Lion of the tribe of Judah, this Lamb after it had been slain.

Was not the reason for this fact that only One who suffers to save men from judgment is fitted to speak of judgment, to reveal it? Simple knowledge is not sufficient. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up, and so we find it set forth at the beginning, that the only one who was fitted to speak of the thunders and lightnings and earthquake and famines and plagues which were to fall upon the earth was the One who died upon Calvary to deliver men from the terrors which were to come.

The Lion of the tribe of Judah prevailed to open the book. God the Father who had created men did not speak of the judgments; the Holy Spirit who had invited men did not speak of the judgments; the One who was

scourged and spit upon and buffetted and crucified for our sins, He it was who loosed the seals and opened the book, describing the judgments which were to fall upon the unrepentant world.

VII

THE TIME OF THE WORLD JUDGMENT

(Chapters 6-19)

WHEN I was younger the word "judgment" to me signified a single event. I thought of it as the time of the great white throne, when all the nations would be gathered before God for a final award. In like manner, resurrection to me was a single event which preceded the judgment and which was universal in character. Time and the study of the word have very seriously modified these views. Judgment now seems a more varied and long continued process and the resurrections which precede it are at least two.

Who is to say how many they may be? It is said in the Word of God that at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, many of the saints which were dead arose, went into Jerusalem and were seen of many (Matthew 27:52-53). We have no further word respecting those resurrected saints. It is significant that we have no word respecting the death of Lazarus after his resurrection.

I have frequently heard ministers and others say that he died again, but I never heard any of them give a Scripture proof of the statement which they made. Personally, I believe that the saints who were resurrected at the time of our Lord's murder were his companions during the forty days, a sort of guard of honor who attended Him in His comings and goings, and I believe that when He arose from the side of Olivet to take His

place on the throne of God, they went with Him and entered then in resurrection bodies into the glory.

While there are some who still insist on a single resurrection for all human beings, I think most persons who study the Bible now agree that before the millennium the dead saints are reanimated and that the bodies of those who have rejected Jesus Christ sleep on until the thousand years are past.

A Thousand Years As One Day

Before we attain to a very thorough knowledge of the Word of God we must come to realize in some measure what is implied in the statement that a thousand years with God are like one day, and that one day is like a thousand years. I think those of us who have come to be what the world calls old, or who will soon arrive at that stage in life, can realize far better than younger persons what this expression means.

Christians too can comprehend it better than the unsaved, for we who are saved have become partakers of the eternal life of God, as Jesus said: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." We humans with our little lives and plans can imperfectly at most and best comprehend the timelessness of God, but when we are studying such subjects as the one which is before us in this chapter, we are reminded that God's thoughts respecting time as respecting other matters are not like our thoughts, that His modes of speech are not like ours.

Let us then fix in mind at the beginning this thought, that judgment in the Bible is a word which may cover many different items before it is concluded. Evil deeds are judged immediately. Persons who have consciences which are at all awake feel the sting and shame of sin

when it is committed. They judge themselves and they are judged. Individuals and nations suffer disasters which mar their happiness or wipe them out, and this is also judgment.

The Judgment as to Works

Saints do not come into judgment as to position, but they do come into judgment as to works; they do not have to be saved after they become saints, they are saved when they become saints, but they are rewarded according as their work shall be, and sinners also are judged, not as to their position, for as long as they reject Jesus Christ they are condemned already, but they are judged as to their works and will be beaten with many stripes or with few stripes according to the light which they have rejected, the evil deeds which they have done.

What, however, does judgment especially mean in the Revelation? What period of time is covered by the opening seals, the sounding trumpets and the emptied bowls of wrath? When will the seals be opened, the trumpets sounded and the bowls be poured out? When will these judgments of wars, pestilences, blazing mountains, bloody seas, confused heavens, when will these things come to be? Here, as throughout this study, one must speak according to the light which is given him. Every man must speak according to his own light. Doing this he does not condemn others but discharges his own responsibility. Every man must give account of himself and give account of his work to God.

One of Many Judgments

To me the time of the judgment of the world is the time which intervenes between the coming of Christ *for* His church and the coming of Christ *with* His church.

The coming for His church seems to be a silent event, unobserved by the busy world. "Behold, I come as a thief," He says.

The thief does not come with great clamor, with a sounding of trumpets and a declaration of purpose; he comes silently, takes the thing he is after if he can get it and goes away. Thus Jesus Christ comes for His saints. The dead in Him arise, the living in Him are changed, together they are caught away in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye and thereafter are with the Lord.

We are commanded to comfort one another with these words. But after a time He comes *with* His saints to destroy His enemies by the brightness of His appearing. He descends from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know not God. All eyes see Him, they also who pierced Him and the kindreds of the world wail because of Him. This is not coming like a thief. This is coming like a conqueror. Now in between these two comings, the coming for His saints and the coming with His saints for the destruction of His enemies and the rule of the world, lie the times of the book of judgments, the times of the opening seals, the sounding trumpets and the emptying bowls.

How Long Will This Be?

I think about seven years. I cannot see the dividing line as many of my brothers do, but there is a distinction between the first half and the last half of these seven years, this seventieth week of Daniel. Further study and prayer may enable me to perceive these two periods of three and one-half years each more clearly than now. At present I seem to see the week clearly, but the divisions of the week not so clearly.

Let us reflect on the condition of the world when the

saints, both living and dead have been caught away to meet the Lord in the air. What will remain in this world when this tremendous event has occurred? Evidently that old dragon, the Devil, will be here. He does not go out from the heavenlies until he is banished, and he will not leave this world until he is cast into the lake of fire. The beast and the false prophet will be here; that is, there will be godless governments and Christless religions.

Does this beast (therion) mean a person or a system? Quite possibly both, but if we must say one or the other, I think undoubtedly a system. Governments which are like lions, tigers, leopards, eagles, which scream and tear and devour, which murder Armenians, which inflict the opium curse on China, which commit nameless atrocities in the rubber countries, in Congo land and Peru for a little bloody money, these systems will remain and when there is not a living or dead saint in the world, when there is no Peace Society or Indian Rights Association, or Federation of Churches, or anyone else to object to the fearful works of godless government, there will naturally be a time of trouble such as the world has never seen.

The Harlot and the Dragon

And in this time, as in our time, the beast will carry the harlot (ch. 17), that is, the scarlet woman rides upon the great red dragon. In a word, the religious systems which reject Jesus Christ, which reject the plan of Jesus Christ will be here and they will have their stately pagan festivities to sanction and sanctify the bloody deeds of godless government. And, fourth, there will remain in the world at this time those who have definitely rejected Jesus Christ—some dead, some living. The Lord will have taken to Himself both the living and sleeping saints at His coming for His people, and the persons, both liv-

ing and dead, who have rejected Jesus Christ will remain.

The end will not come until the gospel is preached to all nations for a testimony, and when the end does come the sleeping and living saints will be caught away and the persons, both living and dead, who have rejected Jesus Christ will remain. The dead sleep in their graves, the living go about such tasks as they may choose.

The fearful march of the dragon and of the beast, the hypocritical pretences and the tawdry splendors of the false prophet and the perplexed minds and despairing hearts of godless men, these will be the occupants of the world.

As has been said before, all evil minds and evil beings are judged already. Judgments against evil men and evil nations are revealed day after day and from age to age in the unfolding providence of God.

The Last Sight of Sin

But there will come a judgment when the beast and the false prophet and Satan and all those who reject Jesus Christ will be cast into the lake of fire, and this is also the time of the opening seals, the sounding trumpets and the out-pouring bowls, and this last time, I think, is in the week which intervenes between the coming of Christ for His people and the coming of Christ with His people to take possession of the throne of David, the seventieth week of Daniel.

Some men may say, "What are the raised and changed saints doing during this period of seven years?" We cannot tell. Here again we have an example of the reticence of God. He tells us enough to make us realize the joys of the saved and the miseries of the lost, but neither here nor elsewhere does He gratify idle curiosity. There is room for many thoughts about these seven years. To some of us it seems as if we shall need them all to

confess our failures, to give thanks for our salvation and to look upon the glorious face of our Saviour who was crowned with thorns and scourged and crucified for us.

VIII

THE JUDGMENTS OF THE OPENING SEALS

(Chapters 6-16)

IT is interesting to note that the series of three sevens are really included in one series of seven, that is, the seven trumpets are included under the seventh seal and the seven bowls are included under the seventh trumpet, so that we have in fact a single series in three movements—the first six seals opened, then the seventh seal which includes the seven trumpets blown, and then the last trumpet sounding, introducing the seven bowls and concluding the opening of the seven seals.

There are three theories as to divine penalties. Some declare that under the government of God penalties are self-inflicted, that is, that the evil doers suffer the natural consequences of their evil deeds. Others hold that in this government penalties are divinely imposed, that is, that God directly visits His wrath, His shames, pains and terrors upon evil doers, and others hold that both these things are true, but that each is only partially true, that neither is universal.

This is my own conviction, both as regards the present time and the time of judgment which will come upon the earth with the opening seals. It seems clear to me, both from the Word and the work of God, that many of the evils which follow wrong doing are the natural consequences of the deeds done. They are divine in the sense that God has so constructed the world that they must follow certain offenses.

The physical results of sensual living, the hatred and contempt which follow avarice and greed, the horror and isolation which are visited upon cruelty and oppression, all these are both divine and human, that is, they result under law and without separation from the acts which cause them.

On the other hand, I feel sure that God providentially overturns the plans, brings to nothing the counsels and destroys the accumulated treasure of godless and wicked men. This judgment is confirmed as we study the world in this time, when it is given over to evil, when Jesus Christ, having been rejected by the world says to it: "I will leave you for a time to yourselves. You object to my rule and methods, try your own."

The Seals, the Trumpets and the Bowls

Under the opening of the six seals we find in general a time of trouble which may be said to arise from the warring, wicked interests of men. There is a red horse with a rider who bears a great sword. There is a black horse who seems to intimate famine which follows war —in the Balkans and in Japan and in Manchuria and Korea, just as it always has followed hitherto and always will follow hereafter.

And there is the going forth of a pale horse whose rider is death, and here we seem to have intimated the pestilences, the plagues which have always followed war and famine and which will yet follow war and famine and which will be especially terrible in the time when the living and dead saints are absent from this world, when the dragon and the beast and the false prophet have unrestricted sway over the bodies and the souls of men.

And then there is the cry of the souls of the martyrs. What martyrs? The martyrs who have preceded the coming of our Lord have been caught up with the changed living saints to meet Him in the air. They are

with Him; they will ever be with Him; they comforted one another with the thought centuries ago, but here are martyrs crying out for vengeance on their foes. Who killed these martyrs? Evidently the dragon and the beast and the false prophet during these seven years. But how should there have been any martyrs, that is, witnesses, for Jesus Christ at this time? When these seven years begin there is not a living or dead saint in the world; the sleeping have been raised and the living have been changed and together, a vast company of happy beings, they have been caught away to meet the Lord in the air.

How then does it come about that there are saints to be slain? It is easy to understand who would do the killing. It is puzzling for a moment to see who are the saints to be killed. This leads to the one broad band of light which we find in this awful time of tribulation. When the first seal was opened there went forth

A White Horse with His Rider

(Chapter 6)

This rider bore a mighty bow, and went on conquering and to conquer. What does this signify? Who was he and what was he doing in a world in which there was not a dead nor a living saint? What place has he in this time of trouble? A white horse, a rider clothed in white apparently. It is my conviction that the rider who went forth at the opening of the first seal was the same one who goes forth in the nineteenth chapter, the eleventh to the sixteenth verses.

And who was this celestial person going forth on this white horse, his word piercing like a sword so that he could kill and make alive? What was he doing at the beginning of this dark and terrible age, when plagues sprang out of the earth and fell down from the sky and poured out of the bottomless pit, when lightnings and thunders and voices were seen and heard from the throne

of God? In the world, after the rapture of the church, the parousia of our Lord, there will be millions of human beings who have rejected the cross of Jesus Christ. They will have the Bible, they will have listened to sermons, but they will not have accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

How will these people feel, what will these people do when they wake up to the fact that there is not a godly person in the world? How will the first Sabbath after the rapture of the church seem to them? No one to ring a church bell, no one to lead a congregation in singing, no one publicly to read the Scriptures or to give an exposition of them.

Nation Born in a Day

How will a godless, Christless, churchless world appear to these people who have lived with Christian folk and acquired at least an outside of Christian morality, who have intellectually approved what they have not spiritually chosen? It is my opinion that a horror will fall upon the souls of those millions and that they will come pouring into the kingdom of God in uncounted hosts. They will not, however, change the character of the world.

They will be saints, but tribulation saints and they will be hated by the dragon and the beast and the false prophet precisely as these malicious beings hate good people now, and they will be murdered. How many of them no one can tell, but multitudes of them, and when the fifth seal is opened, John heard the voices of these slaughtered saints crying out for vengeance upon their enemies. But the answer was that they must wait, that the age of slaughter was not ended, that there were yet more to be slain as they had been and the number of these tribulation saints must be filled up before the lake of fire would swallow their murderers.

When the sixth seal is opened we find convulsions in nature but no tokens of assault. But the horrors of the godless world with its innocent victims and its red-handed murderers and the convulsions of nature will have so impressed the kings of the earth, that the great men and the rich men, the chief captains and the mighty men, and every bondman and every freeman will hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (ch. 6:15-17).

The Trumpets and the Bowls

(Chapters 8, 9, 11, 15, 16)

Now the plagues of these first six periods, it will be obvious, are all of them human in origin. As yet there is no token that heaven or hell have taken arms against the dwellers on the earth, but the moment that we come to the sounding of the trumpets there seems to be a difference.

Hail and fire are cast upon the earth, a great mountain burning with fire is cast into the sea, a great star falls from heaven and corrupts the rivers and fountains of water, the sun is smitten and the stars, the bottomless pit is opened, armies of infernal beings pour forth to afflict and torment; while the revelator looked, these locusts seemed to grow into innumerable armies of horsemen; out of the mouths of the horses proceeded fire and smoke and brimstone, their tails were like serpents and with their heads they hurt.

Here is no exhibit of human agencies, but evidently supernal and infernal powers are at work. Men are not afflicting one another; men are not suffering under famines and pestilences which their own wars have caused,

but heaven has entered the lists, the bottomless pit is made open, torments and death are inflicted by superhuman beings, and at last the bowls are emptied.

When the first one is poured forth there come grievous sores upon the bodies of the godless men of the age; the second angel pours out his bowl upon the sea and it becomes like the blood of a dead man. The third angel pours out his bowl upon the rivers and fountains of water and they become blood; the fourth angel pours out his vial upon the sun and the sun becomes a means of torment rather than a blessing; the fifth angel pours out his bowl upon the seat of the beast, the captain of the godless government of the age and that kingdom is full of darkness and men gnaw their tongues for pain; the the sixth angel pours out his bowl and the waters of the rivers are dried up, unclean spirits come forth, the seventh angel pours out his vial into the air, and then comes a great voice out of the temple and from the throne, saying: "It is done."

Then are voices and thunders and lightnings and a great earthquake such as was not since men were upon the earth. In a word, the judgments of the tribulation time are self-caused and divinely inflicted. They involve the hatred and malice and cruelties of men, but are also rightful inflictions of an insulted God and the torment and death inflicted by infernal agents who pour forth from the bottomless pit where Satan is confined.

IX

PAUSES IN JUDGMENTS

(Chapters 10-14)

THE careful reader of the Revelation observes that between the breaking of the sixth seal and the seventh and between the sounding of the sixth trumpet and the seventh there are pauses—"episodes," some call them—whereas between the sixth and seventh bowls there is no pause, but the movement is rapid and steady from the outpouring of the first to the outpouring of the seventh, and when the seventh bowl is poured out there comes a great voice from the temple and from the throne, saying: "It is done."

I do not know why there are to be these pauses, or episodes between the opening of the sixth and the seventh seals and the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, but it is interesting to note what is to occur in these pauses, and while, in view of the greatness of the theme and differences of opinion between earnest and able students, one must be modest, still there are some things which we may learn.

There were two events recorded as occurring just before the opening of the seventh seal. The angel of God cried with a loud voice to the four angels who had power to hurt the earth, bidding them wait until the servants of God has been sealed in their foreheads, and then the Spirit proceeds to tell us that from each of the tribes of Israel twelve thousand were sealed, or one hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel (ch. 7). This is the

first event which is recorded as occurring in this pause.

The second is a mention of the great host of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues who stand before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice: "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb," and it is recorded that all the angels who stood round about the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, fell before the throne on their faces, worshiping God, and saying: "Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest.

The Saints of the Tribulation

"And he said to me, These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Respecting these transactions let us mediate two questions: First, What is the significance of the sealing of the one hundred forty-four thousand, and second, Who composed this vast company of redeemed ones? Were they the church which had been caught away before the judgments began, or were they the tribulation saints, men and women who had been converted when the white

horse and his rider of the mighty bow went forth, or did they comprise both these companies, the saints who make up the bride and the tribulation saints as well?

The First Fruits of Israel

It is a very remarkable fact, which awakens the wonder of all who reflect upon it, that so few of the Jews in the church age accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. From the very beginning it seemed that the proclamation of the Messiah who had come was more acceptable to Gentiles than to Jews. Many Jews, even a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith, but the persecutions which arose at Jerusalem scattered the believing Jews like chaff before a winter's storm, and going everywhere, preaching the word everywhere, it was accepted in large part by the Gentiles.

There is probably no form of missionary effort today which is so difficult and apparently unfruitful as preaching to the Jews. It seems to make very little difference by whom the preaching is done, by Gentile or by Jew, by man or by devoted woman, everywhere it seems easy for Israel to reject the testimony.

Personally I have found it extremely difficult to find a Jew who reads his own prophets in this age. Of course, the rabbis among them do, but as far as I can learn myself, the Jews are not in this age interested in the subject of religious faith, not even their own. Yet there will come a time when the days of the Gentiles are fulfilled and the days of Israel will return. God has not cast off His people, whom He foreknew, now any more than He had in the days when Paul was doing his glorious and abiding work.

Where Are the Ten Tribes?

I have heard a man who was fairly intelligent and who seemed to know a little about the Bible say that it was

obviously impossible that the twelve tribes of Israel should be assembled again, inasmuch as ten of those tribes were lost and no one knew where they were. Perhaps one should not be surprised at expressions like this. Nevertheless they shock one who is accustomed to read the Bible and take it at face value, for the prophet centuries ago clearly declared that the day was to come when the envy and hatred which existed between Israel and Judah should cease, when the long-parted peoples should be united and when one king should reign over them, sitting in the throne of David (Isaiah 11:10-14; Jeremiah 3:18; Ezekiel 37:19, etc.).

We human beings, with our little plans and our short patience, easily grow weary and it is natural for us to judge that what has been or has not been will continue to be or will never be, but the everlasting God does not reckon in our fashion and is not disturbed by the things which agitate us. His gifts and His calling are without change and the thing which from the beginning He resolved upon is the thing which in the end He will do.

So we find here, after the miseries which may be called human in origin have been visited upon the world which rejected Jesus Christ, the first fruits of Israel are gathered in. It will be a wonderful day when the twelve times twelve thousand are sealed, and one reason why multitudes from all nations and people and kindreds and tongues will accept our Lord in that day will probably be that the chosen people who have for so many centuries rested under the curse which they invoked for themselves in the judgment hall of Pilate, have at last recognized their Messiah and in their hearts have crowned Him "Lord of all."

Is the Number Definite to Signify an Indefinite Number?

Did the revelator see these one hundred forty-four thousand sealed as a number definite, or did this number signify the incoming of a vast host of Jews into the faith of Jesus Christ? One is here shut up to the best judgment he may form without guidance from the Word, and because it is an interesting inquiry, I record my opinion, that we have here the definite for the indefinite. This is not an unusual figure of speech and I love to believe that the saints from Israel will be a vast host who will come in through the dark days of the tribulation period.

The Holy Spirit, through Paul, says that all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26). It would seem not an impossibility that at this time this word might have a glorious fulfilling. Should it be so and a vast company of the sons of Israel gathered from the east and the west and the north and the south, brought on the shoulders of men, fished out from the secret places where they have been hidden, come to God and if they should devote to the proclamation of the gospel the tireless patience and remarkable ability which has made them leaders in the intellectual and financial world, what a host of missionaries that would be and what hosts of converts would they gain!

The Numberless Multitude

If this opinion should prove to be well grounded, we may have a little light on the second question to which I referred. Who constitute this great company which John saw, surrounded by angel hosts, associated with the living creatures who fell before the throne on their faces and worshiped God? Were they the bride, the Lamb's wife? I will not say no, yet I hesitate to say yes.

The saints were at this time with the Lord, but they do not seem at this time to be reigning with Him. Therefore it is not impossible that they are in this great company. But when one of the elders said to the revelator: "Who are these and whence did they come?" and John replied, "Sir, thou knowest," the elder said: "These are they which came out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Now this elder was one of the representatives of the church universal and he looks upon this vast company of white-robed, redeemed ones and asks John who they are and whence they came, and John replied, in substance, that he does not know, that the elder must tell him, and he proceeds to describe them in terms which would seem to identify them with the tribulation saints.

Not the Bride, but Tribulation Saints

I am therefore of the opinion, though I hold it as I do all judgments concerning this wonderful book, subject to further light, that this vast company of redeemed ones were saints of the tribulation, people who had been converted in the days when the rider of the mighty bow went forth on his white horse conquering and to conquer, and also converts who were turned to the worship of Jehovah by the testimony of the first fruits of Israel, the host of converted Jews who through the great tribulation had come to know their Lord.

Whether this opinion shall be found to accord with fact or not, it was a wonderful and august vision and one calculated to stir the heart of the banished servant of Jehovah. In the midst of the wars and famines and the pestilences and the massacres and the earthquakes and the thunders and lightnings, God's cause still advances.

The Jews who bargained for the murder of Jesus, who

cried, "Let His blood be on us and on our children," and who for these hundreds of years have so stoutly refused to recognize Him, at last have come to see Him in His true character and to herald Him to their Gentile neighbors, and so between the opening of the sixth seal and the end of this week of terrors, the first fruits of Israel are gathered and the great host of tribulation saints is assembled about the throne of God.

X

THE TIME OF THE TRUMPETS AND THE SECOND PAUSE

(Chapters 8-14)

WHEN the record of the sealing of Israel and the assembling of the tribulation saints was concluded, the seventh seal was broken. This was the last of the seals; everything which had been recorded in the book was now open to inspection; all the steps through which Jesus Christ was to come to His throne of world empire were now made known or to be made known immediately.

It is not strange that there should have been silence in heaven. Here was to culminate the age-long struggle between Jesus Christ and His great adversary for the possession of the world, and this struggle was to end in an overwhelming victory for our Lord. It was not to be a drawn battle. Always there was mercy, patient waiting through thousands of years, and even when the waiting time was about to expire and judgments of the day of the Lord were about to begin, still there goes forth the white horse with his rider, conquering and to conquer; even in the days of the tribulation there are saints of the tribulation, multitudes who had rejected Christ when He was urged upon them came to Him when no longer the bells of the church and the entreaties of their friends sounded in their hearts, but though there was always compassion, always mercy, always patience,

still there was law, justice, equity and penalties for those who persisted in evil.

Jesus Must Reign

Who would have it otherwise? Who would deprive the ruler of the universe of the power to punish persistent wrong doers, which must be in the hands of every parent, of every teacher and of every official ruler whose work does not fall into hopeless chaos? This anarchy will not be the end of God's administration of the universe.

> "He sits on no precarious throne,
> Nor borrows leave to be."

In this time when it is ended and done there will be none to dispute His rightful authority. The kings of the earth and the great men, and the mighty men, and every bondman and every freeman will recognize His rightful authority, and to this end the trumpets will sound, and when the first angel blows, hail and fire fall upon the earth, and when the second sounds, a great mountain burning with fire is cast into the sea and a third of the sea becomes blood and the creatures in the sea die and the ships are destroyed.

The Trumpets Are Sounding

When the third angel sounds, a star burning like a lamp falls from the sky and the third part of the rivers and fountains of water are destroyed, men die because the waters are bitter; and when the fourth angel sounds, the third part of the sun is smitten and the third part of the moon and the third part of the stars, so that the very order of day and night is confused and uncertain.

When the fifth trumpet sounds, the bottomless pit is opened and out from it pour volumes of smoke like the smoke of a furnace, so that sun and air are darkened

and out of this smoke come locusts upon the earth and they do not devour the grass or green things as other locusts have done, but they strike for men, and not for all men, but for the men who do not carry the mark of God in their foreheads.

Even these men they cannot kill, but they torment them until they wish they might die and seek to die and cannot die; and while this host of tormenting beings is afflicting men who do not have God's mark upon their foreheads, the sixth trumpet sounds and a voice cries from the golden altar, saying to this sixth angel who had sounded: "Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates," and they are loosed and seem to be in some way associated with a vast army of infernal beings, two hundred millions in number, whom they sweep over the earth like a devouring flame, so that multitudes of men are slaughtered by them.

No Converting Power in Suffering

It is interesting to note in the twentieth verse of this ninth chapter, at the close of this terrible story of human miseries which have followed human pride and vanity and rebellion, that all the miseries which have come self-inflicted under the opening of the seals, divinely-inflicted under the sounding of the trumpets, do not avail to convert those who are not willing to know God.

The record is, "And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."

In those days as in these days, men are turned to God and from sin by appeals to reason, by moral considerations. Suffering is an ordained means to cause men to

pause and think, but suffering has never saved, it cannot save; men are saved by the sight of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit; "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

As was remarked above, the second pause in the judgment time comes between the sounding of the sixth and the seventh trumpets, and here we have mysteries, hidden things which are not yet fully revealed, which belong in measure to the time to come. While the sounding of the seventh trumpet waits, the revelator saw a mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, a rainbow upon his head, his face like the sun, his feet like pillars of fire (ch. 10:1-11). This seems to be a description of our Lord; possibly He is intended, perhaps it was some mighty angel occupied by His spirit sent about His work, and this tremendous being had in his hand a little book, open.

The Angels of the Little Book

We have reached the time for a full unveiling; things are now not to be closed up, to be understood in latter days, but to be understood quickly for events are hastening to their consummation, and this angel puts his right foot upon the sea and his left upon the earth and cries with a loud voice as when a lion roars, and when he cries seven thunders utter their voices and when John was about to record what they said, a voice from heaven said, "Do not write the things which the seven thunders uttered," and then the angel who stood upon the sea and land lifted his hand and swore that there should be time no longer. "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets" (ch. 10:7).

I pause a moment to raise a question respecting the

declaration that time should be no more, and when this question is raised, instantly we are reminded that time is a measured portion of duration. Humans look at the circle of the sun, the changes of the moon, the seasons of the year.

We reckon from one event to another event; we speak of five years, of fifty years, of five hundred years, of five thousand years, and well enough we may, for we ourselves are time creatures as yet; we have had beginnings, even if we have received eternal life we have not yet come to the fullness of its significance, and so these measured portions of duration, to us are important, but after we drink into the spirit of the everlasting life, we come more and more into the mind of God with whom one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day.

By and by, for us as for Him, time will be no more; we shall be launched on the ocean of eternity, not simply in fact as we are now, but in understanding and feeling, as we will be then.

The Mystery of God

It is interesting to note in the seventh verse of this tenth chapter that in the days of the seventh angel, when he begins to sound, the mystery of God is to be finished. What is the mystery of God? A mystery is a hidden thing which requires revelation in order that it may be understood. There are those who object to mysteries, who say that they cannot and will not believe the mysterious, as they put it; they will believe what they can understand.

What a small creed this would constitute for any living being, for we all are dwelling in the midst of mysteries and shall dwell among them to the end. Our lives are mysterious, our sicknesses are mysterious, our minds are mysterious, our bodies are mysterious, there are myste-

ries in the earth beneath and in the heavens above; a few have been explained, a thousand wait for the work of man or the voice of God, and in the Bible there are mysteries, many of them.

It was a mystery how the Gentiles and the Jews, hating and hateful as they were, could ever come to be one body. But my impression is that the mystery of God in this particular place signified His incarnation in Jesus Christ, His suffering for the redemption of the world and the processes of judgment through which He would take possession of the world as His rightful realm.

Many Mysteries, This Mystery of God

The seventh trumpet was the last of the trumpets. Under the seventh of the seals and under the seventh trumpet were included the outpouring of the seven bowls, and when these seven bowls of wrath were outpoured, the mystery of God would be completed, that is, the work which Jesus Christ was to do in taking possession of His kingdom would be concluded. When the series of sevens were ended time should be no more, the mystery of God would be completed, the kingdoms of this world would become the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I do not know who the two witnesses are to be. I have heard some say they know and I have friends who think they know. Some of them must be mistaken for they do not think alike, and I am as yet uncertain. Is there here some reference to Moses who had power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to Elijah who had power to shut the heavens and again to cause the rain?

Are these two men who did not die the deaths of other men, but who passed mysteriously and without the sight of their fellows, who were buried by the angels or caught away in a chariot of fire, are these men to

take their places in the holy city and are they to be slain and to lie unburied in the street, an object of scorn and contempt to those who have done the murder? I cannot tell. The words are significant, but precisely what they are intended to teach, I do not know. We may know hereafter, we shall know hereafter if it is needful for us.

And the measuring of the temple. Does this refer to a rebuilt Jerusalem, or is it spiritual in its reference? I cannot tell. Some think they know; let us hope that we may learn, but at the end of this pause comes the sounding of the seventh angel, and after he sounded there were great voices in heaven declaring: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever."

And after these great voices sounded forth, the four and twenty elders fell down upon their faces and worshiped God, and the temple of God was opened in the heavens and there was seen in the temple the ark of the testament. That ark has not been seen by human eyes for two thousand years. Men have told us that it cannot be seen; some have told us that it is hidden in the excavations under the temple area. I do not know, but the ark of the testament was seen by John and there were lightnings and voices and thunderings and an earthquake and great hail (ch. 11:19).

XI

THE THREE WOMEN OF THE REVELATION

(Chapters 12, 17, 19)

THERE are three notable characters in this book indicated by the title of this chapter. There is the sun-clothed, star-crowned woman of the twelfth chapter, the scarlet-clothed woman of the seventeenth chapter and the bride of the Lamb of the nineteenth chapter. It will be helpful to the student of this portion of God's Word to think of these three in their several characters and work for a little time.

There is substantial agreement as to the second and third. Students differ in opinion regarding the first. Here, as elsewhere, we must find our way carefully and with humility, for while Christ's person and work are clearly revealed, we are in the midst of mysteries when we consider the mighty beings and events which are associated with Him.

The sun-clothed, star-crowned woman was about to give birth to her child and before her, waiting the infant advent, was a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and crowns upon his heads; his tail drew the third part of the stars and cast them to the earth. The woman brought forth a man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

The woman fled into the wilderness where there was a place prepared of God that she should be fed a thousand, two hundred and three-score days. It would be

a help to us if it were recorded that this woman was upon the earth, this dragon upon the earth, but it is said that the two wonders, the woman and the dragon, were in heaven and the record goes forward to say, that Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and that the dragon and his angels resisted, but that in the conclusion the dragon was cast from heaven into the earth and that his angels were cast out with him.

The Dragon Cast Out of Heaven

In the ninth verse of this twelfth chapter the dragon is identified. He is said to be the old serpent called the devil and Satan. The child of the woman also seems to be clearly identified, for he is said in the fifth verse of this chapter to be one who was to rule all nations and that he was caught up unto God and to His throne. There can be no possible doubt, I think, here. The child is our Saviour King, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the One who is being unveiled in this whole book.

With these two points determined, the identity of the dragon and the identity of the child, we seem to be helped forward a little regarding the identity of the woman. Two opinions have prevailed respecting her; one that she was the church, the other that she was Israel.

Both the church and Israel, however, have had their place not in heaven, but on the earth and this wonder of the woman, sun-clothed, star-crowned with the moon beneath her feet, was seen in heaven and the dragon was in heaven and the war which arose was in heaven, and as the result of this war, the dragon, that old serpent, the Devil and Satan, with his angels who had resisted the angels of God were cast out into the earth.

Who Was the Star-Crowned Woman?

Does this sun-clothed, star-crowned woman then signify Israel or the church or some heavenly representative of one or the other? The criticism of Dr. W. J. Erdman on the theory that she represents the church seems to be decisive. He says: "The church did not produce Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ founded the church." I do not see how the force of this argument is to be broken. In my own mind I am shut up to the other possibilities.

I would accept Dr. Erdman's theory that this woman represents Israel without qualification but for the fact that the wonder was seen in heaven, and I do not see how Israel can be said to have brought forth the Messiah there. I am not confident here, the sounding is deep, my judgment may change, but these difficulties at present push me forward to the conclusion that this sun-clothed, star-crowned woman who appeared as a wonder in heaven, who brought forth the man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, was a heavenly representative of an earthly organization.

Difficulties No Doubt

There are difficulties here undoubtedly. The child was caught up into heaven to God and to His throne. Therefore he was apparently upon the earth; the woman fled into the wilderness where she was maintained for twelve hundred and sixty days; the war was in heaven, the dragon was cast out of heaven into the earth and when he was cast out the revelator heard a loud voice rejoice that the dragon and his host had been cast out of heaven into the earth; the same voice utters a cry of sympathy for the earth and the sea because the dragon has been cast out of heaven into them.

The woman flies into the wilderness; there is no

wilderness in heaven. The serpent seeks to drown her with a flood, apparently he is no longer in the heavens but in the earth. The earth helps the woman by swallowing the flood which the dragon casts out of his mouth after her, and the dragon who has made war in heaven and been defeated makes war on the earth with the remnant of her seed which keeps the commands of God and has the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Considering the whole setting of this wonder, I conclude that the sun-clothed, star-crowned woman is a heavenly representative of earthly Israel, that the vision shifts from heaven to earth without remark and that we are dealing in most of this chapter, not with the wonder which John saw in heaven, but with the beings represented by that wonder who were in the earth. This will conduct to the conclusion that Dr. Erdman is right in his thought that this woman represents to us Israel of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.

The Scarlet-Clad Woman

This splendid but debased and miserable person is set before us in the seventeenth chapter. Her garments are described; she is said to have been arrayed in purple and scarlet and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, and to have held a golden cup in her hand. Upon her head was written her name, "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth."

Her character is indicated; she was drunken with the blood of saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And as John wondered, the angel said: "Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her." He then goes forward to speak at length of the beast, saying that he had been but was not, but should finally ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition.

The seven heads of the beast are described as seven mountains. They are said to be seven kings, five of whom have passed, one of whom is and the other of whom has not yet come, but when he comes he is to continue for a short time. The beast that was and is not is the eighth, is of the seventh and goes unto destruction. The ten horns are ten kings and they have one mind and give their power and strength to the beast; these kings make war with the Lamb and the Lamb overcomes them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings.

The Waters Are Nations

The waters where the harlot sat are said to have been peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues and the ten kings are said to hate the harlot, to strip her of her glorious apparel, to eat her flesh and burn her with fire, for God, it is said, has put into the hearts of these kings to fulfill His will and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

And this woman, clothed in purple and scarlet, decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, with the golden cup in her hand, is said to be that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.

In the eighteenth chapter following, the destruction of Babylon is set forth with events accompanying, the wailing of the kings of the earth, the mourning of the merchants and the astonishment of shipmen. The apostles and prophets are called upon to rejoice in the ruin of this great city. A mighty angel throws a stone into the sea, saying: "Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all."

The voices of musicians, the labors of craftsmen, the grinding of millstones and the shining of candles, the voice of the bridegroom and bride, all these have passed

away and in this great city is found only the blood of the prophets and the saints who have been slain upon the earth.

Who was this scarlet-clad woman whose name was Mystery, Babylon, who represented a great city, who was splendid in apparel but drunk with blood, who was destroyed by the very beast which had borne her and who in the end was utterly consumed?

The False Prophet

Another baleful being is set forth in the nineteenth chapter. He is associated with the beast as the scarlet-clad woman was. He is called the false prophet and is said to have been cast with the beast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Who was the false prophet? Was he identical with the scarlet-clad woman, the harlot, the mystery of Babylon? If not identical, was he related? The harlot was destroyed by the kings; Babylon was destroyed by the judgments of God, the false prophet was cast into the lake of fire. Do these three names signify one person or three persons who are related? Let us seek our way as prayerfully and carefully as we can.

Christless Faiths

When sin entered the world God promised a Redeemer who should bruise the serpent's head. When the Mosiac ritual was wrought out every sacrifice pointed on to the Serpent-Bruiser to come. When the reality came the shadow ceased to be and since Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, no Jewish altar has borne its bleeding victim.

There are more than ten millions of Jews in the world today, but there is no Jewish altar nor Jewish sacrifice. From the day when Cain brought his offering of the fruits of the earth and was rejected while Abel brought his lamb for a sacrifice and was accepted, these two altars

have stood side by side in the world—the altar of Abel testifies the guilt of sin and the need of a Redeemer who should shed His blood for the offences of the people; in every age the altar of Cain has declared that men may come to God, bringing the fruits of their own labors without the intervention of an offering whose blood has been shed.

No man who judges from human probabilities, could possibly have believed that the Christian system would survive its first advocates; it was so contrary to the natural disposition of men; it was so hated and opposed by the wise and wealthy and powerful of the earth that anyone who judged from the probability of the case would have said that it must surely and quickly die.

And yet it has lived, strangely lived, and today gives every thoughtful person reason to believe that it will still progress until all enemies have fallen before it and it has become a great mountain to fill the whole earth.

Harlot Churches

It is a wonderful figure that we have in this expression. The depths and fullness of its meaning we cannot begin to comprehend. The bride owes to the husband love and reverence, and much as the word is hated in our time, true and wifely subjection. The husband owes to the wife love and protection and provision and a true and loyal comradeship. These hints teach us something about what is signified by this expression, the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Idolatries throughout the Word of God are called adulteries. When Israel followed false gods the prophets called her a harlot, and when Judah followed the example of Israel the prophets denounced her in most terrific terms as one who had broken her marriage vows. So far all is clear. There is evidently included under this term "harlot" the false religions of all countries

and all times, and when it is declared that the false prophet is to be cast with the beast into the lake of fire, it is a declaration that before the kingdom of Jesus Christ is established in this world, all religions which teach salvation by any other means than the blood of Jesus Christ, will perish.

Rome and Mohammed

Historically there are two great systems which have turned the eyes of men from the Saviour of the world: The apostasy of Rome and the rivalry of Mohammedanism. I think it would be impossible to find in Romanism the entire content of the scarlet-clad woman, yet there are many things which must awaken thought after one studies the long history of that great church. The very colors which are worn by cardinals and priests are suggestive; the vast accumulations of wealth which have been made by that church; the fearful stories of the Inquisition which may be apologized for in view of ignorance and superstition but which can never be justified; the attempt to substitute salvation by ceremonies, for salvation by repentance, confession, restitution and faith in the Lord Jesus, all these are significant and no thoughtful man can study this system without being oftentimes reminded of the passage which is under consideration.

So too the false prophet seems clearly set forth in this scripture. The colors are different but the moral teaching is much the same: Be obedient to the teachings of the prophet, and you are assured of paradise. Salvation does not come by the blood of Jesus, but by the teachings of the prophet. The blood of the saints, how freely it was shed! Through how many years was it shed! How unrepentant are both these great systems today! But the essence of spiritual adultery is the rejection of Jesus Christ and the doctrine that salvation

may be attained by human exertions. In our time and in this country there is no organization or group of organizations which is teaching this doctrine so continually as are the secret lodges.

In every village, in every great city are groups of men, or men and women which ignorantly or intentionally teach all who are willing to learn that salvation is not by the blood of Jesus but is by the works of men. The devotees of this false system are found everywhere. Some of them profess Christian faith as well as the pagan faith of the secret order, but you cannot go amiss of persons who will assure you without hesitation or shame that the orders of which they are members are quite as good as the Christian church, while many of them will not hesitate to say that in important particulars they are better.

I then identify under these terms the harlot and the false prophet all systems in all ages which profess to secure the salvation of the human soul irrespective of the work of Jesus Christ. It is my conviction that in time all thoughtful students of the Word of God must agree to this exposition.

The Bride, the Lamb's Wife

We have spoken of the characteristics of the true faith. It begins with faith in Jesus, continues following in His footsteps and ends with Him in glory. When this last stage in the life of the true church is reached, she is denominated the bride, the Lamb's wife. She dwells in a home He has provided, she wears garments which He has furnished, she is crowned His queen and shares with Him in the administration of universal empire.

Here again there is much which is not revealed along with much which is revealed. What is the occupation of the risen and reigning Son of God in those days after He comes with her to set up His universal empire in the

world? I do not know. When is the marriage of the Lamb and His bride to take place? Apparently at the end of the great tribulation and just before the millennium kingdom is declared.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God" (ch. 19:7-9).

The March of the Conquerors

And directly after this majestic proclamation we find our Saviour King riding forth in triumph, the beast and the false prophet cast into the lake of fire, the dragon bound with a chain and cast into a pit for a thousand years of imprisonment; the world subdued to Jesus Christ, not an open rebel daring to raise his head throughout those wide domains; sickness and sorrow and sin banished, the saints reigning with their risen and returned Lord.

I conclude, therefore, that the sun-clothed, star-crowned woman with the moon beneath her feet is a representation of Israel as divinely chosen and ultimately redeemed, purified and sitting with Jesus to judge the world. The scarlet-clad, gem-decked woman seated upon the scarlet beast is to me an embodiment of the anti-christian religions of all countries and times; wherever we find men teaching that salvation can be obtained independent of the salvation of Jesus Christ, wherever we find men talking about earning their own safety, there we find a representative of this Mystery, Babylon, Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth.

The bride, the Lamb's wife, is to me the church as con-

stituted in the divine thought and as ultimately to be presented without spot or wrinkle or blemish or any such thing in the very presence of God Himself.

It is my opinion that the bride is to be perfected in the coming of the Lord, that those who sleep in Christ Jesus and those who live in Him, the former in resurrection bodies, the latter changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and caught away to meet the Lord in the air, constitute this wonderful being.

wrong, but must on the other hand always do right, they are free to have this opinion, as far as I am concerned.

There is, however, great danger in even tolerating this attitude of mind. The Holy Spirit does not speak in approval of persons who say to the Creator: "Why hast thou made me thus?" (Roman 9:20). I do not advise anyone to take the chances of thus offending the Almighty; "In whose hand thy breath is and whose are all thy ways" (Daniel 5:23).

It is not a safe thing to criticise the Almighty, and so, apart from the fact that I should personally prefer to be a free being, is the danger of even tolerating the wish to be anything else. But once more I repeat, if there are to be free beings, there must be the possibility of sin.

"Who Made the Devil?"

This question which seems irreverent and which certainly is a bit dangerous, is oftentimes put to us by godless men. It would be just as sensible to ask who made liars, or unkind people, or cheats or thieves. Undoubtedly God is the author of their being and it is equally clear that they are the authors of their own sin. They were under no compulsion to plot for the destruction of property and the injury of their fellowmen.

They do this freely, not because they must, but because they are evil, and that is the reason why the devil does his wicked work, because he is a devil, though at his creation he was as innocent as these wicked persons were when they lay smiling babies in their cradles. Satan undoubtedly had an advantage over them for they came into the world with a bent to sin, not a necessity for sinning, but a tendency to do wrong. He came into the world a spotless being with no tendency to evil, but with the possibility of evil.

I am of the opinion that the Miltonic view is essen-

tially true, that he was a celestial being of lofty position and corresponding powers. My impression is that ambition, "the last infirmity of noble minds," deceived him; that the fact of eminence bred in him the desire for preëminence and that this temptation which he could have mastered and should have mastered, mastered him. I do not profess to affirm; I express my judgment. We are sure that he must have been created without sin and that his evil doings and evil nature are the result of his own work.

Where Is Satan?

In Job 1:6 and 2:1, it is clearly affirmed that he has power to present himself among the sons of God. It is equally clear that he has permission to go to and fro throughout the earth. From the gospels, in a score of places, it is evident that he delights to occupy and control human beings.

I well remember what a shock it was to my whole being when I saw for the first time the truth that Satan *now* has access to the very presence of God; that still, as four thousand years ago, when the sons of God present themselves before Him Satan comes also among them, and from Revelation, the twelfth chapter and tenth verse, it appears that he will have this privilege of free ingress to and egress from the presence of God and the angels until the seventh angel has sounded, until the great tribulation is almost at an end, until the kingdom of God is at the door.

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." But before this we read that "there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his

angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (ch. 12:7-12).

The Sons of God, Satan Came Also

According to these scriptures Satan has had and has now the privilege of appearing among the sons of God. He also has power to come and to go from the earth and when the church has been carried away from the earth, when the sleeping saints have been raised, and the living saints have been changed, and the world is given over to those beings who have rejected God, when the seals have been opened and the trumpets have been sounded, and the vials are just to be poured out, the final chapter in the penalties which God visits upon a sinful world, then he and his hosts will be barred from the celestial court.

They will not longer be permitted to come and go at liberty; they will be shut up to the earth where they tarry a little on their way to the lake of fire which burns with brimstone, their ultimate destiny. If this be a correct statement of the teaching of these scriptures, it is vastly important and should be thoughtfully and prayerfully meditated by all the sons of God.

What Is He Doing?

Names often indicate characters. Frequently they do etymologically, always do they when we became acquainted with the persons who bear them. No American needs to be told what you mean if you call him a Washington or a Benedict Arnold; no Jew requires to ask your meaning if you call him a Judas. It is one of the beautiful things in human experience that names of those

who love us become sweet to us even when they are not themselves specially beautiful. There will probably not be one person who will read these words who cannot think of some dear friend, pure and noble and helpful in character, whose name is not particularly beautiful but has come, because of the character of the one who bears it, a representation of everything that is delightful in human thought.

Now the names of Satan are etymologically and derivatively significant. He is an "accuser," he is a "destroyer," he is a "tempter." Perhaps the two thoughts of destruction and accusation will cover most of the works which he performs. He ruins men primarily by solicitation to do evil deeds. He did not hesitate to attack Jesus Christ Himself with this purpose in view. "Fall down and worship me," he said, "and I will give you the kingdoms of the world and their glory."

In some form or other he makes this same proposition to all the sons of men. "Accept me, or the things which I control, as your chief good, and I will bestow them upon you." This is his proposition and what multitudes of men accept it! How many tens of thousands there are today who are by ambition or greed or vanity or lust, led into the pits of corruption.

When he can secure sin on the part of free beings he has accomplished all his evil desire, for sin brings with it physical ill, intellectual darkness, financial ruin, social degredation, the whole list of evil things which men fear, yet which men choose when they will to do evil.

The Case of Job

The case of Job should be studied more carefully than it is by all those who desire to know what Satan is doing in this age, for it is a divine revelation as to the character and work of that enemy of God and men. It is clear from the story of Job that Satan utterly failed in

his attempt to get him to do evil. In that far away day this man of Uz held fast his integrity and positively refused the way of sin. Job had from God Himself the magnificent testimony that he feared God and hated evil.

The whole story from beginning to end is the story of a man who amid the temptations, first of wealth and power, and after that of loathsome disease, abject poverty and forsaking friends, held to the path of duty. "In all this Job sinned not" (Job 1:22). And when we arrive at the wonderful close of this marvelous story God Himself speaking again says to the friends of Job, who had felt sure that he was hiding sin somewhere in heart or life: "Ask my servant Job to pray for you. I will hear him; you have not spoken of me the thing that is right as my servant Job has" (Job 42:7, 8). Here then we have an absolute breakdown and failure in the attempt to force a good man into the path of sin.

What then? Does Satan give up the assault? Not at all. That is not his method. He says to God: "Let me strip him, then he will curse you to your face." And God says to Satan, first: "All that he hath is in thy power" (ch. 1:12), and again: "He is in thine hand, (ch. 2:6). But in the first instance God said: "Do not touch him," and in the second He said: "Do not destroy his life."

Satan's Favorite Work

And then the record is that Satan stripped this man of Uz to the very bone; one piece of property after another was swept away, winds, fires, robbers and thieves, all were turned loose upon him until he sat down alone, a childless beggar who had been a prince. And when the second permission came and Satan was allowed to put his hand upon Job himself, he smote him with a loathsome disease; here physical torments, social isola-

tion and suspicion of friends all combined to make every moment a separate and deadly agony.

Now what does all this show as to the occupation of Satan? It teaches as clearly as it can be taught that when he cannot succeed in his efforts to make men sin, he delights to do all that he can to cause them to suffer. My dear mother, who has been with the Lord these twenty-two years, said to me, I suppose a hundred times when I was a boy at home, speaking of this same malignant and evil being: "He worries whom he can't devour with a malicious joy."

I do not doubt that there are today thousands of godly men and women who have maintained such characters as Job did under the assaults of satanic temptation, who are suffering today as Job did, under satanic assaults on the lives of friends, on their property interests and on their physical frames, and I am sure that Satan today is telling them, as undoubtedly he told Job, that their sufferings are caused by their sins, whereas these sufferings come, not because of their sins, but because of the malice and wrath of Satan against people who are living holy lives in hard places.

I believe this *one truth* is to be so great a comfort to thousands of the Lord's people that I shall count it a sufficient reward for the time and strength I am expending on this book. There are a great host of the Lord's people who do not understand the deadly character of this enemy with whom they have to do, and this ignorance results in spiritual depression and a failure to obtain victory.

The sons of God who are able, humbly yet gratefully, to believe that they have such testimony of God respecting their walk, do not need to be discouraged because their children die or their property disappears or their bodies are afflicted. When Satan cannot injure a child

of God in one way, he injures him in another, if he is permitted. This is his character and this is his history from the beginning until now.

How Long Will He Keep at Work?

He will keep at work through the church age. He is very busy in Laodicea; he put Balaams in Christian pulpits to boasting of denominational successes, of personal attainments and the like. He inspires them to say, "We are rich and increased in goods," when the poor blind leaders of the blind do not know that they are poor and miserable and wretched.

He invites lodges, the present antichrists, to sit once a year in houses dedicated to the worship of God through Jesus Christ. He inspires men to build up the church with wood and hay and stubble—men who do not pray by themselves nor with their families, men who do not read the Bible, men who do not hallow the Sabbath day, men who are not honest in business, men who are not clean in life, but who have a little money, some social or political station—how many of our churches are cursed by such material today—fuel fit for the fire!

Satan delights to have churches built up in this manner. He delights to have godless men think themselves Christians, confess themselves so, that thus he may confuse the minds of sinners, may lead them to believe that there is nothing whatever in the faith of Jesus Christ, and no man who reads or observes or thinks needs to be told that he succeeds too frequently in this endeavor.

He is not a coward and he is not a quitter. He does not leave a man unless he is resisted; he does not vacate a community because some nerveless, well-wishing persons desire he should; he fights for his own hand and he does not give up until he is beaten; shameless and

impudent, he goes today as in the olden time among the sons of God into the very presence of Jehovah.

And What Does He Do There?

When he is in the earth, as already seen, he has two great lines of labor; he tempts men to sin and when he fails in this he seeks to injure them in their families, their business arrangements, their physical beings. It is obvious that this is not his errand when he comes into the presence of God among His sons. What is his business then and there? This also is clearly revealed; it is illustrated by example in Job; it is affirmed in the tenth verse of the twelfth chapter of Revelation.

He is the accuser of the brethren, that is, when he cannot get them to sin and when he is not permitted to do them harm, he goes before God Himself and lies about them, and he does this persistently. The Holy Spirit in Revelation says that he makes these accusations day and night (ch. 12:10). What the character of these accusations is we have intimated in the Book of Job. All that he can truthfully say against the people of God, of course, he will say; sins which have been repented and pardoned he will delight to rehearse, and sins which have been thought but which have never come to be, which he has himself suggested but men have refused, these he falsely attributes to the objects of his malicious hatred.

"Yes, Job has done pretty well; who would not? You have given him such a delightful place in the world and surrounded him with so many blessings. Take these away, and you will see what he will do." "Yes, I confess Job did better than I thought he would do; he stood the loss of property and of children, but you afflict his body, or let me do it and then see what Job will do." This is the position of Satan in the presence of Jehovah.

He accuses the brethren night and day and he will

keep this up through the church age and into the great tribulation; he will never cease from it until he is cast out from the heavens into the earth. The earth which he has blackened and marred, the earth which he would gladly have utterly destroyed, this will become for a little time his prison-house.

He will no longer be able to range the hills on which the sons of God gather, and after a little pause in the world which he has sought to destroy but which Christ has determined to redeem, he will be cast into the lake of fire.

It is very foolish for people to ask questions about this awful lake. If they would think more and pray more and talk less, they would have a more wholesome dread and would be less inclined to trifling remarks. I have been horrified scores of times in meetings of ministers and church people to hear jokes about this lake of fire followed by laughter on the part of people, who ought to dread it for themselves and for their children and for their neighbors and friends. We do not comprehend it fully. God grant that we may never be able, but no one who has meditated for a little on the character of Jesus Christ believes that when He was here in the body and when He spoke to John in this last word to the churches He was talking about a trifling matter when He spoke of the lake of fire that burns with brimstone.

XIII

THE REIGN OF THE SAINTS

(Daniel 7, Revelation 20, Luke 19)

NO one has read thus far in this book without observing that I assume without question the truth of the Bible. I do not understand it all, but I believe it all and when I find in it things which I cannot explain, which I do not fully understand, I am not led to believe that the statements are untrue, but simply that I do not comprehend them. In other words, I attribute my failure not to my learning, but to my ignorance, and thus also I interpret the writings of my fellowmen.

It is a great mystery to me that persons can profess to believe the Bible, can take texts from it and preach sermons and at the same time deny in detail that which they thus admit in bulk. I have heard this done over and over and I am terrified and ashamed to think that men who profess to interpret and enforce this holy Word can deal with it in this fashion.

"The Saints Shall Take the Kingdom"

This statement, made in Daniel 7:18 and in Revelation 5:10 and 20:6 and in Luke 19:17 and 19, together with similar statements which abound in the Word of God, would seem to be decisive as to the place and character of the millennial reign. The time is definitely stated: they shall reign with Him a thousand years.

It is admitted that this expression might be figurative, but there is no intimation that it is, and I do not see

any reason for lugging in an interpretation which is not required. The church age is a time definite; it extends from Pentecost to the parousia, from the time of Ephesus to the time of Laodicea. The great tribulation seems to be a time definite, not perhaps so absolutely revealed, yet revealed. From the reason of the case, one would say that the time between the coming of our Lord *for* His church, the parousia, and the coming of the Lord *with* His church to assume His kingdom after the destruction of His enemies, the Epiphany, would necessarily be time of trouble such as the world had never known.

When the dead saints have been raised and the living saints have been changed and Jesus has taken them away from the earth, what must the condition of the earth be? I admit that the seventieth week of Daniel has connected with it, difficulties of interpretation, but the teaching of the prophet meant something. What did it mean? And the teaching in Revelation concerning the period of three years and one-half, which is by many students believed to indicate the last half of the last week (ch. 11:7-12), would seem to harmonize with the interpretation intimated.

The Days Shall Be Shortened

One would expect that the time of the tribulation would be short. We do not consider it natural that Jesus Christ should for a great while leave the world in which He suffered and over which He intended to reign, to the unrestricted forces of evil, and I am glad to remind you once more of the going forth of the white horse with his rider of the mighty bow at the breaking of the first seal.

I am not especially concerned with the question of exact time. Here we have the words, "a thousand years." If in place of one thousand it should signify

a thousand weeks of years that would be an added consolation and glory. According to the clear teaching of Scripture, Jesus Christ is to reign in this world. What an august picture of the beginning of His reign do we have in Daniel, the seventh chapter, verses nine to fourteen! It is equally plain that His saints are to reign with Him. This is declared in Daniel and with equal positiveness in the Revelation.

The power of the saints in the millennial kingdom is to be determined by their faithfulness during the church age. This is clearly set forth in the nineteenth chapter of Luke. Why now should we make difficulties where there are none? It will be no more impossible for Jesus Christ to come to this world in the glory of His Father with all His holy angels, destroying His enemies by the brightness of His appearing, than it was for Him to come a wailing babe in the manger of Bethlehem.

It would not seem to many of us so remarkable that He should come to reign as it was that He should come to suffer. While accepting without hesitation the teaching respecting His advent to suffer shame and ignominy, we are not disposed to disown or to render insignificant the teaching respecting His glorious appearing.

I therefore insist that we who are Christians and who have built our faith on the unshakable Word of God are entitled to the hope and courage which the thought of the millennial reign affords. It certainly will not detract from any spiritual gladness which we may have in ages to come if during this period of a thousand years we should, according to the teaching of our Lord, reign with Him on the earth.

Faithful Over a Few Things

Accepting the Bible teaching respecting the reign of Christ with His people on the earth, we find in the teaching of Luke nineteen a stimulus to energy and

faithfulness. In this long, beautiful time when the reign of sin will be utterly broken, when there will not be a whiskey shop, or a brothel, or a gambling den, or a war camp, or a battleship, or a hard-hearted millionaire, or an idle beggar, or a crying child, or a heart-broken woman in the whole world, when the nature even of wild beasts will be changed and the lamb shall lie down unharmed by the lion, when the nature of the ground itself shall be changed and instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree (Isaiah 55:13), how glorious it will be to live.

I think that many of us, when we reflect on our sinfulness and our sins, have no special ambition to have authority. It will be quite sufficient that we are permitted the holy companionship of that marvelous age. That we should have been made free in the universe of God, that we should come and go without restriction among the sinless angels, among the glorified saints, in the very presence of our Lord Himself, this will be quite enough for us and we shall find the language of joy and thanksgiving native to us; we shall love to sit and look upon that patient, thorn-crowned, transfigured face that suffered the ignominious blows in the halls of Caiaphas and Pilate.

But God has never dealt with His people on the ground of worthiness. He supplies all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus; He does not look upon us as we are in our weaknesses and infirmities, but as we are in Jesus Christ and as we are to be because of that which He has done, is doing and is yet to do. He suffered for us according to the Scriptures; He was raised for us according to the Scriptures; He ascended up on high and intercedes for us according to the Scriptures, and He is coming again to receive us unto Himself according to the Scriptures. And according to the Scriptures we are not only to share in the joys of the mil-

lennial age, but we are to be entrusted with authority according to our faithfulness in the church age.

The Saints Shall Judge the Angels

One of the most marvelous questions in the whole Bible has always seemed to me to be that one put by the Holy Spirit through Paul to imperfect persons like ourselves: "Do ye not know that ye shall judge the angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:3). I think that most Christians, when they think of those sinless beings who have been these ages past going hither and yon on the errands of God, instinctively shrink from their companionship. Not because we do not admire them but because we are conscious of our own failures and sins.

It seems to me that the natural feeling of a Christian would be one of shrinking, that we should fear lest we should be despised by these who had never known the power of temptations such as we have met or the torment of sin, and to have it intimated in this question that the saints are to sit in judgment on the faithfulness of the angels is to me an unspeakable marvel. I do not profess to comprehend, I only apprehend.

But this wonderful teaching seems to harmonize perfectly with the thought which is before us. The saints are to reign on the earth; in proportion to their faithfulness they are to have authority over ten cities, over five cities, over one city, over a ward. The principle is clear; we are to be entrusted with authority according to the use which we have made of the powers and opportunities which were bestowed. Earthly ambition has been a tremendous factor in the history of mankind, both for good and evil.

Desire for power has worked tremendously in the souls of men and among the institutions of the world, both civil, social and political. I think it is the universal belief that where a universal desire is found among normal

men that desire is God implanted and has provided for it a God-ordained satisfaction. Is it not true that oftentimes the lower ambitions, which God condemns, have crowded out the higher ambitions which He has implanted?

Covet the Best Gifts

Would it not be a glorious thing if today men who are striving after power, after money, after pleasure, after social recognition, could become enthused with the desire to become Christ-like and to have a large place in His coming kingdom? I have no doubt respecting this matter. If the thought of reigning with Christ on the earth had been of no value, He would not have told us that it was to be the lot of the churches, of some of His children, and if it would not be well for men to study their talents and opportunites and having determined what they are, seek to improve them to the full, there never would have been written such parables as that of the pounds or the talents.

These scriptures have one plain teaching, that is, You shall have reward according to your energy, according to your faithful improvement of that which has been committed to you. The nobleman distributed to his servants his goods, went to a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and returning, took account of his servants that he might know how much each one had gained by trade, and having received their reports he assigned to them responsibilities according to the record which they had made.

Is there any ambiguity in teaching of this kind? The nobleman unquestionably represents our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The far country into which He has gone is the heaven which has received Him; the kingdom which He was to receive He has received; He has sat down with His father in His throne; He is to

return to take account of His servants. This He will probably do in those mysterious years between the rapture of the church and the Epiphany, and having taken the account He will distribute authority in the millennial age according to the work which we have done.

Differing Motives Are Legitimate

Persons who do not think as wisely as they should, sometimes condemn the use of lower motives because there are higher motives which should also be employed, but both Scripture and reason teach that we do not destroy the higher when we insist upon the lower. Foolish people sometimes say that they will not be scared into Christian faith, yet every person who is not stark mad is influenced by fear every day of his life.

He puts on his overcoat and overshoes lest he should take cold; he perils his health to go on a journey to secure a debt lest he should lose property; he summons the police if his house is assailed lest he should be robbed or murdered; he steps off the railway track lest he should be run down by an engine; he teaches his wife and his children to do the same, and if he had a neighbor who did differently he would feel that the neighbor should be committed to a mad-house. But when the danger of death eternal, which is clearly set forth in the Word of God is mentioned, or when the danger of failure to gain all of the reward which he might gain is mentioned, all at once he becomes enamoured of higher motives and thinks, or says he thinks, that we should never be influenced by any other.

The fact is, we are complex beings and we are in a complex universe. There are a thousand different forces acting upon us, all of them divine in character and divinely intended to work our highest usefulness and happiness. Among these motives is the desire for power, and while everyone recognizes the glory of earthly

ambitions, some persons would criticise a spiritual ambition. It is safe to say that God does not do this. Certainly Jesus Christ was not doing it when He said of one man: "He shall be over ten cities," and of another, "He shall be over five."

Earthly Conditions in the Millennial Age

We do not know much about them. Someone speaks of the reticences of God. He never seeks to gratify idle curiosity. There is a divine "needs be" in whatever He says and does. We know a few things about the earthly conditions; that the world itself is to be purified and be a new world. The very seeds of evil plants which have been bringing forth their thistles and thorns for thousands of years will die by fire or otherwise.

The nature of the wild beasts will be changed and those which for thousands of years have been enemies of mankind will become subject to mankind so that a little child shall lead them; there will be such a state as will naturally result from sinlessness. How beautiful the faces will be! How they will smile each into the other! How strange to live in a whole world where there shall not be a frowning countenance or a slighting remark, but where each shall be desiring to comfort and strengthen and help the other!

Will our houses remain? I am inclined to think that they may. Will the churches that we have built be filled with congregations of happy prayerful saints? I am inclined to think that they will. Will the theatres and the dance houses, which have been devoted to money-making through the ruin of the souls of men, be transformed into assembling places for the worshippers of God and the benefactors of men? I am inclined to think that they will.

Will there still be newspapers? I think so, but there will be no accounts of murders, divorces, prize fights;

there will be no advertising of tobacco or liquor or any other thing which degrades the beings that God has made. It will be a wonderful age and this world a new world in which righteousness shall dwell will be a glorious place in which to live. And He who is our Saviour King will sit upon the throne of David; the times of Israel will return; the people whom He chose will become joyful followers of the One whom their fathers rejected and killed.

Will Our King Be Confined?

Is it not strange that people should raise petty, thoughtless difficulties when contemplating the Bible teaching respecting this wonderful time. I have heard men say that Jesus Christ will then be "confined" to Jerusalem. Who said that He would be "confined" to Jerusalem? The Bible says that He will sit upon the throne of His father David, but it does not say He will be "confined" to that throne. One would suppose to listen to such remarks that the mighty Son of God, who even when He was here in His humiliation could pass unseen through an angry, howling mob, will become a helpless victim of His circumstances, will be nailed down to a throne of a city, whereas even before He left this world He could come and go freely without hindrance from obstacles which would prevent the movements of men.

Let us have done with such things as this, since we are no longer children but men, let us put away childish things and without attempting to know what is not revealed, without pretending to know what God has put beyond our power, let us believe the things He has declared and let us rejoice in the glorious possibility as put before us, and since He has taught that we are to rule with Him, and to rule over less or more according to our faithfulness, let us be faithful.

If we have lost time by sin or folly or indifference, let us lose no more; let us remember that He is willing to restore even the years which the cankerworm has eaten (Joel 2:25), and let us expect such things from Him as we have never seen or dreamed of, let our lives be such that the Holy Spirit may reveal these things which the eye of man has not seen, which the heart of man has not even conceived, but which God has revealed to us by His Spirit through His Word.

XIV

THE BOTTOMLESS PIT

(Chapters 9 and 20)

THIS dread abode is mentioned twice in the Revelation. In the ninth chapter, at the sounding of the fifth angel, a star falls from heaven to the earth and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. It is interesting to note the significance of the star. The star fell from heaven and to *him* was given the key of the bottomless pit; that is to say, the star was a person. This naturally recalls the first chapter and the statement that the seven stars in the right hand of the Messiah were the seven messengers of the churches.

Why should this remarkable figure be used to signify divine messengers? The stars of the first chapter may have been men, they may have been angels. In the ninth chapter the statement is explicit: the star was an angel. The luminous, splendid being whom John saw dropping from heaven to earth was in appearance like a shining meteor. It is possible also that the word still is used to describe the angel because of the character of the being as well as by reason of his appearance.

Messengers from God are light bearers; they give information; they promote gladness, and they produce holiness in those who attend to the messages which they bear. Here as everywhere there is a correspondence of the inner and the outer. The messengers of God produce light and they are light. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. "I saw a star fall from heaven

unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit."

God Employs Agents in His Work

The law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator (Galatians 3:19). This is a most remarkable expression. To ordain is to set in order, to establish. It is a thought-provoking expression to say that the law was ordained by angels. We have also many instances in which the angels are recorded as busied with the concerns of men. Angels over and again appeared to the people of God to counsel, direct, encourage and strengthen. They announced the birth of our Lord, they comforted Him in His agony, they watched about His grave.

There are many who believe each person who comes into the world is attended by a guardian spirit who wards off dangers, instructs as to duty, warns against sin and strengthens for the performance of appointed service. "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father" (Matthew 18:10). There are those who believe that angels are the God-appointed representatives of the heavenly kingdom for the care of nations as well as of individuals. Daniel 10:13, 20 and 21 seem to intimate that this is the fact.

It is my own opinion that this is true and that God cares for people, for nations, for cities, and towns by angel ministers.

> "Millions of spirits walk the earth unseen,
> Both while we sleep and when we wake."

I mention this because I think we are prone to forget God's methods and His methods are important as well as the ends which He attains. If it is true that He cares for us as He did for our Saviour King through angels, if they are interested when we are born and when we suffer

and when we die, it is well that we should remember the fact and be helped by it. It is my opinion that the administration of God's empire is like the administration of earthly governments in this, that always agents are employed. This would seem to be the teaching of reason and it is evidently the teaching of Scripture.

A Gloomy Prison-House

If there were any part of the creation from which angel ministers might be excused, one would think it to be this dark and wretched abode of infernal spirits in which, during the thousand years, Satan is to be confined. But here in this chapter we find an angel carrying the key to this prison and in the twentieth chapter we find this angel or another one, who has not only the key to this prison, but a great chain in his hand.

This angel lays hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and binds him for a thousand years with this mighty chain. He casts Satan into this bottomless pit and closes the door and seals it that no power should release him until the thousand years of peace and blessing were ended. Thus we find the divine method both as to evil and good; the holy are protected and the wicked are punished by the agency of angels.

I may pause a moment to say further that, in my judgment, the forces of nature are administered by these same celestial beings. At all events, in the Revelation again and again the throne of God and the heavenly beings who surround it seem to be the center out from which go forth the thunderings and the lightnings, the earthquakes and the mighty voices which awe God's children and terrify His enemies.

What Is the Bottomless Pit?

Do we have here a description of a place or an intimation of a moral condition? If the latter, what is the spiritual state signified by this expression "the bottomless pit"? I do not look upon these words as describing a place. It is easy enough to imagine something of this kind; a vast and gloomy cavern within whose deeps "a lower deep still threatening to devour me opens wide." But the moment one attempts to suppose a physical reality corresponding to this imagination, he falls into difficulties.

My impression is that we have here an intimation of moral character and of separation from God and all holy beings. Whatever may be the reason it is true that everywhere righteousness is associated not only with light but with height, and evil is associated not only with darkness but with depth. Joseph Cook years ago spoke of the fact that holiness seems to be naturally associated with the power to rise, and that vice and crime render the spirit sodden and heavy, and that this exaltation or downward drag are communicated by the spirit to the body.

There is no question but that this is true and, of course, that it is a divine arrangement, for we do not ourselves cause the feelings of exaltation or the feelings of sinking down; we mount up on wings like eagles, we run without being weary and we walk without being faint when we are in right relations to God, and this not by our own will but by the natural laws of the universe in which we are placed. If this be a correct interpretation, the word "bottomless" will not perplex us.

Evil beings belong in a pit, but beings who persist in evil grow more evil. It is one of the dire results of sin that it becomes more powerful with each hour's supremacy. This is the universal experience of men.

The drunkard is not a drunkard at the beginning, he becomes a drunkard by drinking; the covetous man is not in his youth enslaved by his greed as he is when his hairs are gray.

The first falsehood causes the cheeks to redden and the eyes to drop and the heart to tremble, but after a time it is not so. It is a fact which appears from both nature and revelation that the good man becomes continually more settled in his virtue and that the evil man becomes more helplessly the victim of his sin. The bottomless pit is the state of moral corruption in which all beings are who will evil and reject holiness.

It Is Also a Prison

What is a prison? It is a place from which there is no free egress. The prisoner has not the privilege of coming and going at will; he is shut up to the prison precincts. He may move in the prison, but he may not move out of the prison. And this also is the condition of the sinful man, and in proportion as he is a sinner the walls are deep and high, the gates are thick and strong. In this world good and evil beings associate, but the association is outward, not spiritual.

As the Holy Spirit says in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16: "What communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" This spiritual isolation is an experienced fact in the lives of men. Husband and wife dwell in the same home, sit at the same table, travel in the same machine, but it does not follow that they have community of spirit; if one of them is a believer and the other is an infidel, they cannot have communion of spirit. They are separated by the laws of spiritual being.

Light cannot harmonize with darkness, good cannot harmonize with evil; the love of God cannot harmonize

with the love of this world. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "The friendship of this world is enmity with God." But while spiritual relations are thus spiritual, they tend also to become realized facts in outward experience. Not only are the husband and wife who are not at one, not spiritual mates, already separated in spirit, but they are likely to become separated in fact.

The unworthy husband not only fails to share the feelings of a worthy wife, but he shortly begins to neglect his home, he goes early, he stays late, and if this spiritual condition continues, he will shortly desert his home and go to his own place. This is the present experience of thousands of miserable persons, those who had the opportunity of spiritual fellowship and happiness, but who rejected it and became separated in position as they were already separated in heart.

Fixed Spiritual States

I have already referred to the teaching of Joseph Cook, who was one of the most profound thinkers the world has ever known. In one of his lectures he raised the question whether a good man could become so good, so established in righteousness that it would be impossible for him to sin, and whether an evil man could become so evil so established in evil doing that it would be impossible for him to do right. It was his opinion that all finite spirits tend continually to fixedness of character and position.

He believed that a good man who persisted in righteousness would ultimately come into such a state that it would be absolutely certain that he would not sin, though the question of possibility might be waived and that the evil man would come into such a state that it was certain that he would not choose good, though once more the question of inability need not be passed upon.

That this teaching is true, accordant both with reason and revelation, is my decided judgment, and it is one of the things which should make us continually thoughtful, that every free act tends to perpetuate the character out of which it springs and also tends to ceaseless reproduction of itself. This is a reward of righteousness. This is a terrific penalty of sin.

While this is unquestionably true, that the pit with its soundless depths and its iron walls is subjective, it is the apparent teaching of this scripture that there is also an objective reality in it.

> "The soul is its own place,
> And of itself can make
> A heaven of hell
> Or hell of heaven."

But while the soul is its own place, and of itself can make a heaven of hell or hell of heaven, it is also true that God does not will that evil doers should continually be associated with the doers of righteousness.

This bottomless pit, this condition of moral evil into which men come, never by the arbitrary decree of God, but always by their own evil choices, has an iron door and the key is not in the hands of the demon spirits, but is in the hands of the angels of God. Wicked men are shut away from the companionship of the holy beings by the will of God as well as by their own evil natures.

John saw an angel, like a falling star, passing from heaven to earth and in his hand he had the key of the bottomless pit. He saw this same angel, or another like him, with the key in his hand and also with a mighty chain. He saw him lay hold upon the dragon, that old serpent, the Devil and Satan; he saw him binding that dark and malignant being with the chain and shutting him up in the pit so that he should no longer be free to come and go to accuse and to assail. The world was to

be made free from his dark and hateful presence for a thousand years.

The Infernal Cavalry

When the angel seen in the ninth chapter opened this prison-house of evil beings, there arose from it vast volumes of smoke and out from the smoke locusts and these locusts were not like those with which we are familiar, that eat grass and leaves and green things, but they attacked men; not all men for there were tribulation saints, but all the men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads; and they were not permitted to kill these wicked men but to torment them for a period of time and these tormented men sought death and did not find it.

Then we have the description of these locusts as they appeared to John, like horses with crowned heads and men's faces, and streaming hair, and lion teeth, and iron breast-plates and scorpion tails, and they did not come and go by their own will, but "had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." This passage from the ninth chapter clearly shows that Satan is familiar with the bottomless pit already, but he is not confined to it.

He is hopelessly depraved, he is continually descending in the scale of moral being; by character he is separated from God and goodness, and he is permitted to associate with holy beings only as God is pleased to permit. He is not yet shut up for the thousand years, though he is shut up, but he may also go forth and may lead his uncounted demon hosts to inflict miseries upon men who do his will. It is strange that men with the sight of the suffering which sin has caused, is causing, must continually cause, should ever do wrong.

We have here in the final plagues which are visited upon a wicked world an extension of a state of fact which

exists before our very eyes. Let us be careful; there are thousands of people who suffer, not because of their own sins but because of the sins of other people, but all suffering comes from the sin of someone and the vast majority of the sufferings of men come upon those who sin. At the sounding of the fifth trumpet this same state of fact will be revealed in the fullness of its terrible reality.

Out from this abode of evil spirits, this bottomless abode of evil spirits, this deep within whose deeps "a lower deep still threatening to devour," will open wide, will pour forth locusts with the faces of men, demon spirits which have intelligence but who have been perverted morally until they have become a devouring plague rather than a heavenly benediction, and while these demon spirits now assail all men, the Jobs of mankind as well as the Judases, when the fifth trumpet sounds, when the bells of the final judgments are sounding through the hearts of men, these evil demons, permitted free course in the world by the angels who have power to confine or to release them, will assail the men who have not the seal of God in their foreheads, that is, the men who have the mark of the beast in their foreheads and in their hands.

Fools Make a Mock of Sin

How true it is and how terrible will be the end of their laughter! Now they organize their lodges, they send out invitations to their dances, they wink and whisper and joke about those who testify concerning their secret abominations, they build their palatial saloons and gambling dens, they establish their "Everleigh Clubs," they talk about "making a night of it," and "having a good time," etc.

They will be able to do this a little while, but soon the church will be caught away and evil men will be left to themselves and the dark and malignant spirits

whom they have chosen for companions; wars will come, famines will come, pestilences and plagues will come, thunders and lightnings and earthquakes will terrify them, diseases will fall upon them, the sea will be like blood, the rivers and fountains of waters will be corrupted, the sun and the moon and the stars will become agents of pain instead of blessing, and at the sounding of the fifth angel the star-like being, having the key of the bottomless pit, will fall from heaven, the pit will be opened, the demon locusts will pour forth, the tribulation saints who have been the objects of hatred of the men who do not have the mark of God will be protected, but demon spirits will be free to assail the men who have chosen the worship of demons.

They will be intelligent, but they will be like scorpion serpents and the evil men who have laughed and danced and feasted and blasphemed and persecuted the righteous, will beg to die and death will flee from them. How many are the demon hosts dwelling in this bottomless pit who will come forth to torment the godless and wicked men that will then dwell in the world? We do not know how many, but we know that the number of this army which poured out at the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets was two hundred millions.

We are not told that this exhausted the soundless depths of that dread abode, but we see enough and men who are careless respecting their living will do wisely if before it is too late they pause even now, to meet in mercy that Jesus who is shortly to come in judgment. It were better for a man that he had never been born than that he should live in sin and die without repentance and hope.

XV

THE PRAYERS OF SAINTS

(Chapters 5:8 and 8:3)

AS I have said, it is my hope that this book may prove usable. I have no ambition to make a reputation for learning or to secure earthly rewards from the writing. For many years I derived very little advantage from the book of Revelation. Since I began to study it twenty-eight years ago, it has continually grown upon me as a book intended to accomplish real blessing for the people of God.

During the last three years when I have made it a continuous study, I have read and heard what I could from others about it, and while many of these speakers and writers are learned men and I have derived advantage from everything they have written and said, it has seemed to me in most instances that their work would not be especially helpful to a farmer, or a merchant, or a physician, or a blacksmith, or a motorman, or a railway conductor, who should undertake to read them.

I presume my brothers who have done this work would say that these people were not competent to understand their writing and that they had not done it for them but for a totally different class of people. This may be true and it may be legitimate, for different people require different modes of approach, but certainly these common folk also need this word. There is no intimation as far as I know anywhere in the book that it is intended for a single class of persons only.

I believe it is planned for all the people of God as we approach the end of the church age, and I hope this writing may be helpful to many of these common people. If it is not, it will fail to accomplish the purpose for which it is written and I shall be sorry. If it is of service to ordinary men and women, housekeepers, schoolteachers, clerks, students in college, people who cannot claim great learning, but who do need to know what Jesus Christ is doing and how He is to obtain possession of this world which is His rightful inheritance, I say if it is of service to this class of persons, I shall be well repaid.

"What Profit Shall We Have If We Pray Unto Him?"

(Job 21:15)

This question was asked by a man whose character and temper we cannot wholly approve, but my observation leads me to believe that there is a great host of God's people who often in heart and not infrequently in words ask the same question. In this Laodicean age when lukewarmness has supplanted zeal and when unbelief aspires to interpret the Word of God, we are distinctly told by many people that there is little or no profit in prayer.

There are a great multitude of people who pray and all persons, even these unbelievers pray when they are in dire danger. Prayer meetings on sinking ships are not a novelty, and lips which have not prayed when life was full and strong are oftentimes given to prayer when the tide is running out and death is at hand. But God intended prayer to be the life breath of His people. Jesus, the sinless Son of God, is our great example in this as in other respects.

He prayed in the morning very early, He prayed all night, He prayed when He had hard work to do, He prayed when hard work had been done. He taught His

disciples to pray, and He spoke a parable to men to this end: "That men ought always to pray, and not to faint." His followers in every age have patterned after Him in this respect. No man has ever had spiritual power who has not in some measure learned the prayer life, yet how far short we come of His great example and how frequently ought we to pray, as our brothers did of old, that He would become our teacher.

The Golden Vases, the Incense and the Prayers

Incense was one of the offerings which was commanded under the Mosaic law. It was probably taught directly to holy men centuries before that law was given. The fragrance and the ascending column were significant. When the worshipper approached the tabernacle or the temple, the first great object which claimed his attention was the altar of sacrifice. By symbol as well as in words God thus taught His people that there could be no fellowship nor acceptance without life sacrificed, blood poured out. The neglect or the refusal to perceive this truth is the fundamental error in the Cain worship of the world. Men cannot bring to God the works of their hands and be accepted, unless they have first brought the sacrifice which is commanded.

Passing on toward the most holy place, the worshipper came to the laver, a token that after we have been pardoned through shed blood we have need to be washed and made clean. This symbolic teaching which we find away back in the beginning of Israel's life, we find also among the last words spoken in the New Testament: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." There is probably no one weakness in the church today more serious in character and fatal in tendency than the neglect of this great truth, that men need not

only to be pardoned, but also to be cleansed. They should not linger ever at the altar, but should pass on to the laver.

Still going forward, the worshipper found himself in the holy place, with light on his left hand and bread on his right, which teaches us that after we have been pardoned and cleansed we can be lightened and we can be fed; that is, we can know what we ought to believe and do, and have strength to do it. The candle-stick and shewbread are the divine provision for men who have been pardoned and cleansed. It is probable that there are two capital mistakes made in regard to this divine provision.

No Light for Godless Men

Godless men are continually asking after light and regretting their inabilities before they have been pardoned and washed, and godly men who have been pardoned and washed are prone to neglect the light which is prepared, the bread which is freely offered. Every student of the Word of God knows that unpardoned, unwashed men cannot have light and they cannot have strength. When they say that they cannot understand why God should do this or that or the other thing, they speak truly.

They are blind men and their blindness is doubled for it is both in themselves and in their situation; they are blind men in the dark; a double inability to see and know rests upon them. If they would confess their sins, God would be faithful and just to forgive their sins, and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness. Then they could walk in the light, and men who have eyes and walk in the light can see, and furthermore, God would provide bread for them so that they could avoid the evils which they foresaw and could accomplish the duties which were revealed.

If the worshipper still went on he came to the altar

of incense, a golden altar standing before the veil which separated the holy place from the most holy place, and on this golden altar there were no loaves of bread, no bleeding offerings. From time to time on this golden altar incense was offered, fragrant clouds ascended from it and diffused themselves throughout the holy place. This, beyond question, signified the praise and thanksgiving which naturally arise from the heart which has been pardoned and washed and enlightened and fed.

Incense a Part of Universal Worship

I have already alluded to the fact that this part of worship was common to holy men through all the early ages. In our time, persons who wish to discredit the Christian faith and lessen its authority over the souls of men are accustomed to make much of the comparative history of religions. They make inquiry as to whether or not Christianity is the final word in religion. Some of them speak as if they expected themselves to become authors of portions of the Word of God. Of course, these expectations, if they have them, are not realized. Their books die; nay, they are never alive, they are born dead and after a few years they are forgotten.

Yet, as in all error, there is a measure of truth in the thought which these brothers are seeking to utter. It is never declared in the Bible that God began to speak when the holy men who were moved by the Holy Spirit began to write. On the contrary, the Bible clearly reveals the fact that God spoke to men in all the ages and that from time to time some men listened and obeyed, while others refused to hear and went on to their ruin. Now among the things which God taught men in the early ages was undoubtedly much that had to do with worship.

Men always needed to know God, always needed to know how to approach Him and He taught them, and if

they continued to obey they were led on from day to day and from holiness to holiness. There is no question but that this is the teaching both of reason and revelation, and among the things which men learned in this early day about the mode of approach to God was the duty of praise and the significance of ascending incense, and so throughout the ages it has been part and parcel of the worship of Almighty God.

It Still Has Its Place in Worship

We live in a time when the formal has given way to the spiritual. The sign has given way to the thing signified. Not in Samaria nor in Jerusalem now do men worship God, but true worshippers worship Him in spirit and in truth: "He seeks such to worship Him" (John 4:23).

But there must remain the same element in the spiritual which we found in the formal and so incense must have its place.

What is incense? Incense is praise. Men who have been pardoned, cleansed, enlightened, fed can properly praise God. Men who are unpardoned cannot really praise God at all. They are rebels. How can a rebel acceptably speak the praises of his lawful King? If his King deserves to be praised, He deserves to be obeyed, and so the altar always stands before the holy place. But when the soul has been pardoned and cleansed and enlightened and fed, it not only may acceptably offer praise, but it is duty to do so.

And here is set forth the duty of thanksgiving which again is one of the points where we fail grievously; in the church of Laodicea persons who are lukewarm in religion, neither cold nor hot, who profess faith but who have no particular interest to extend it would not naturally be occupied with the praises of God. They are not, and it

is a notable fact in all the worship of today that the note of praise is frequently wanting.

We have lecturing, exposition, exhortation, oftentimes, *ad nauseam;* blind men speaking of the beauty of color and form, and unholy men speaking of the beauty of holiness, but little praise; social meetings of the church given up to little sermons so that the minister is to do the praying and the preaching and nobody is to offer praise. This same evil tendency has taken possession of our hymns, and you may find a hundred hymns which exhort and pray where you will find one which is filled with thanksgiving.

The Prayers and the Incense

"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" (ch. 8:3, 4).

I think we have now reached a point where we can understand the teaching of this beautiful symbol; and, in the first place, let us note that the prayers of God's saints are precious to Him, and He does not allow them to be either forgotten or unanswered. We are in this book already far on in the final week of the church age. The seals have been opened, the natural evils which arise from unrestrained sin have been experienced by the people who dwell in a world from which the saints, dead and living have been removed.

The trumpets are about to sound; visitations of judgment and the demon hosts from the pit are about to visit divine penalties upon men who will not serve God but prefer to serve His enemies. The great tribulation is on, a time of trouble such as the world has never seen;

God has left the world to exhibit the natural results of unrestrained evil.

Men might suppose that the prayers of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, of Wickliffe and Huss and Luther, the prayers of pious slaves who were whipped because they cried when their babies were sold, the prayers of all the saints in that dark age, seemed to be forgotten before God; godless men would affirm freely then as they do now that prayer can at best have nothing but a subjective effect, that God pays no attention to it, that He has His great mill geared and that it grinds out its grist irrespective of the cries of His children.

But in this age we find the prayers of the saints still remembered before God. They have been preserved in golden caskets, not one of them is forgotten before Him, so let the reader who sometimes has been disheartened because his prayers do not seem to have immediate attention, take courage and hope. The petitions of God's people are before Him in the heavenly places.

He takes note of them before the mighty beings who control the redeemed universe: He exhibits them before the countless millions of angels who have never sinned; the redeemed hosts who have through much tribulation entered into the kingdom of God, find here the requests which they made of their Father so many years before, and for the full answers to which they have waited.

Prayers and Praises

We should notice not only that the prayers of God's people are preserved and are thought of by our heavenly Father, when many times we have forgotten what they were, but we should also note that these prayers are mingled with praises. The prayers of saints and incense were together before the throne of God, and it is significant that the word "much" is inserted here; "There was given unto him (the angel) much incense, that he

should offer it with the prayers of all saints." I have already spoken of the fact that we are deficient in thanksgiving.

I am sure that it is true. Both my experience and my observation have confirmed this judgment. I am also thankful to believe that there is far more real thanksgiving among the people of God than appears on the surface; that is to say, our thanksgivings are oftentimes unuttered. We are grateful, but we do not express our gratitude; we feel, yet do not speak, and this is a grievous fault, but it is not so evil as actual, stupid ingratitude would be.

Even among ourselves we know how frequently human hearts are broken and homes destroyed, because men and women do not express to one another the appreciation which in some fashion they really experience. There are many ten thousands of discouraged, broken-hearted men and women today who would be comforted and happy if the people who are about them would really utter the regard which they have. Criticisms are the stock in trade of home life to a shameful and deadly extent.

Husbands criticise wives, wives criticise husbands, parents criticise children, children criticise parents, and how seldom is honest, hearty appreciation and praise rendered when everyone concerned would admit that it was due! I do not know how many persons are to read these words, but I imagine within ten years they will be read by one hundred thousand persons. I believe as firmly as I believe in my own existence that if these people, be they more or fewer, would omit for a year criticisms which do not really need to be uttered and would express thanksgiving which they know is due, which they in some measure feel in their hearts and for which other hearts are hungry, the result would be such a flood of happiness, such a revival of religion, as the communities in which my readers dwell have not known for years.

Man Is Made in the Image of God

But man is created in the image of God. This is the first word that we have concerning him and God records Himself, not merely as our Creator, but our Father. He feels toward men as men do to their children. The duty of praise is a perpetual obligation. God notices praises as He does prayers before the throne of God in the heavenlies. The prayers of the saints with much incense are offered before the throne of God.

Let us therefore be encouraged, both to pray and to praise. Neither the one nor the other is unimportant to our Heavenly Father. When we forget to pray or to give thanks, we grieve Him as well as injure ourselves. We ought also to remember that we wrong our fellows as well as ourselves and our Father when either our incense or our petitions are lacking.

> "There is no heart but hath its hours of sadness,
> There is no eye but hath with tears been wet;
> There is no voice but hath been heard to languish,
> O'er hours of darkness it can ne'er forget."

This is more than poetry, it is fact and in these hours of darkness, when hearts are sad and eyes are wet, in the time of temptation, in the time of doubt and fear we may be and should be helpful to one another.

Oftentimes the shortest road to the human heart and need is by way of the throne of God, even if the burdened one is so near that we might touch him with a hand. In many homes there are telephone extensions and the person who is upstairs may talk with the person who is downstairs by way of the central station which is a mile distant more easily than he could go down or ask the other to come up. It is even so with prayer for our friends.

When we talk to them we may oftentimes blunder;

when we talk about them we are practically sure to do so, but when we talk to God for them we are very certain to be wise and to be helpful, so let us pray and let us praise, and let us take from this teaching the joy and comfort which God intended it to be, that our prayers and our praises will be alike preserved in golden chalices forever in the presence of God and our Saviour King and the heavenly hosts and the uncounted multitudes of the redeemed.

XVI

THE FIVE WORLD EMPIRES

(Daniel 2 and 7; Revelation 19 and 20)

WE can never profit by a book unless we keep in mind the purpose which it is intended to serve. Let me, therefore, remind you once more that the book which we are studying is The Revelation of Jesus Christ. There are, as before noted, other revelations, but this is the Revelation, and this is not the revelation of Jesus Christ as He was with the Father before the world was, nor is it the revelation of Jesus Christ in His humiliation, when He was in the form of man, buffeted and scourged and crucified for our salvation. This is the revelation of Jesus Christ in the kingdom of His Father, and it gives an account of the events through which He becomes established in His rightful rule over the earth.

In the beginning of this revelation He is walking among the churches and upholding their angels. Then He is with the Father, surrounded by the four living beings, august and tremendous, who control the redeemed universe. He is surrounded by the four and twenty elders, that is, by the church universal, and by the uncounted hosts of angels who have kept their first estate and never sinned.

At its close He comes forth riding upon a white horse. On His head are many crowns, the crowns of universal empire. He has now become King of kings and Lord of lords. The beast who represents the cruel, oppressive,

corrupt, wicked governments of the world is cast into the lake of fire; the false prophet, the scarlet-clad woman, the harlot, representative of all the religions of the world which teach that men can save themselves, can be saved by anything except the blood of Jesus Christ, this false prophet is cast into the lake of fire with this beast.

In other words, when we see Jesus Christ in the closing events set forth in this revelation the world empires and the world religions are gone, and the kingdom of our Lord has become the kingdom of this world both spiritually and governmentally. He sways the scepter of universal empire.

Daniel and the Revelation

All students of this book know that it is closely related to Daniel in prophetic outlook. This is not the only case of co-ordination between the two testaments. It is safe to say that no one will understand the Epistle to the Hebrews who does not make a careful study of the Book of Leviticus, and that Leviticus will be dead and dark to one who does not make a careful and prayerful study of Hebrews.

When we turn to the subject of world empires we instantly think of Daniel. In two chapters he deals directly with this subject. In the first instance, chapter two of his prophecy, he interprets the dream of the mighty king whose captive he was. In his dream the king saw the magnificant statute of a man. The head was of gold, the arms and shoulders of silver, the body of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet and toes of iron mingled with clay.

As the king looked upon this imaged creation, a stone in some unseen unaccountable way detached itself from the mountain and smote this image on its feet and reduced it to chaff and dust. Meanwhile this stone becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth. This is, in a

word, the dream of the king. The prophet has a parallel vision which is recorded in the seventh chapter.

The Vision of the Prophet and of the King

The interpretation of the vision of the prophet is the same as the interpretation of the vision of the king. In the case of the king there were four metals, gold, silver, brass and iron, and there was a smiting stone which destroyed the statute, became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. In the prophet's dream there were four great beasts which came up from the sea—that is, there were four great governments which had been established by men; each of these governments was different from the other; the first like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard and the fourth, a beast with great iron teeth which devoured and broke in pieces. This beast had ten horns and after a time three of them were destroyed by a little horn which came up and plucked out the three. In this little horn were eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth which spake great things.

Of course, I need not remind you that horns among the prophets were symbols of power, as horns among cattle are weapons of offence and defence, so the horns on this beast are significant of ten kingdoms, ten world powers, which sprang from this fourth beast, dreadful and terrible and strange exceedingly. As the prophet still beheld, these thrones were cast down, the throne of the lion, the throne of the bear, the throne of the leopard, the throne of the fourth beast, and the thrones of the ten kings which had their power from the fourth government.

And when their thrones had all been levelled the "Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire." A fiery flame issued from before him. "Thousand

thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him." This chapter goes on to speak of the one like the Son of Man who comes with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of days and receives from Him dominion and glory and kingdom, that all nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is to be an everlasting dominion and His government is to be one that shall not be destroyed.

It is also interesting to note that in the eighteenth verse of the seventh chapter and that in the twenty-seventh verse the saints of the Most High are definitely declared to share in the kingdom with the Son of Man. As already noted, the vision of the king was like the vision of the prophet in all that it signified, the only difference was in the manner in which the series of events were represented to the one and to the other.

Four Kings, and Then a Fifth

The teaching here is, in brief, that there are to be four world empires, and then a fifth world empire which is to destroy what remains of the former four world empires; that this fifth world empire is to become universal and that power in it is to be swayed by the Son of Man and the saints of the Most High. King Nebuchadnezzar was told, "You are this head of gold. Your successors, the Persians and Medes are the silver kingdom. Their successor is the Macedonian or Grecian kingdom.

The Roman kingdom which succeeds is to be so great and terrible that the preceding kingdoms are to be forgotten." It is a marvel how perfectly this figure is carried out in the history of the world. The Roman kingdom was divided. The Medes and Persians were a double kingdom. The figure had two arms and two legs, but a single head and one body, indicating the unity of the Babylonian and Macedonian powers as contrasted with that of the other two kingdoms. And furthermore

the feet on which the image stood had ten toes and these ten toes represented the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was to be divided. In A. D. 476 the power of Rome departed. In A. D. 1453 the Sultan made the Mosque of St. Sophia from what had been a great Christian church. Since that time the western and eastern empires have been divided kingdoms.

It is not difficult to see how five may be counted in the west and five in the east and it is not difficult to object to the count, but the general fact remains that the world empire of Rome was first divided into two kingdoms, and after that into a large number of smaller kingdoms, and that these kingdoms are in varying forms still in existence, and according to the teaching both of Daniel and Revelation they will continue to exist until the stone cut out of the mountain completes its work; until one like to the Son of Man comes to reign with His saints, until Jesus Christ our Saviour King gathers to Himself the crowns of the world and sways the scepter of universal empire. Gathering up these teachings, we learn that in the governmental history of the world there are to be five universal rulers and only five—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Macedonia, Rome, eastern and western, and then the Lord from heaven.

Attempts Which Have Proved Failures

It is not difficult, as one reads the history of the world, to see how from time to time efforts have been made to falsify this prophecy. We need not seek after many; let us take a few. If there were ever a man in this world who seemed adapted to universal empire that man was Napoleon the First. In intellectual power, in cruel and ruthless energy, in comprehensive views, in a world-grasping ambition he was seemingly a man of men to give us the fifth empire if it were possible that a fifth empire should be before Jesus comes. You do not need

to be reminded how marvelously he increased in power and how terribly he fell.

From a peasant home in Corsica to the throne room of the Tuilleries, and from the throne room of the Tuilleries to the sea-locked island of Helena, and from the sea-locked island of Helena to the sarcophagus in the Hotel de Invalide on the banks of the Seine: this is the short, brilliant, desperate, disappointing story of a human life. That he was a God-appointed person to accomplish certain results there is no doubt. He smashed as with the hammer of Thor the kingdoms which had grown up about him. He planned, beyond question, a world empire for himself.

He filled those thrones which he had first shaken down and then set up with his own relatives and marshals. But he had not taken God into account. He said that "the Almighty fought on the side of the strongest battalions." I suppose there never was an army of equal numbers more fitted for purposes of war than the half-million men who marched into Russia. But the God whom he had ignored and despised, with the snow and the cold, wasted that vast army until a few scattered thousands they returned to the border over which, a mighty host, they had set forth.

It is said that one of them, blackened and worn out with cold and hunger but borne up with the tremendous spirit of a soldier, crossed the Nieman at midnight alone. He burst into the home of a friend who could not see in his blackened, distorted visage the magnificent soldier whom he had known, and said to him: "Who are you?" and he replied, "I am Marshal Ney, I am the rear-guard of the French army."

The World Empire

There is no doubt but that in our day we have had a number of men who have believed it possible to so arrange

matters as to gather to themselves the power of the world. From time to time it has looked as if their attempts might succeed. The Standard Oil, the railroad systems of Harriman, the financial plans of Mr. Morgan—each one of these in turn has seemed to bid fair to control the world, and each one of them from time to time has been strangely and mysteriously smitten.

These great men, who have seemed to despise all government, except what they might sway in the realm of money, have been brought before courts and legislatures. They have been required to answer to the representatives of the common people for the treasure they have accumulated and the legislation which they have secured. No one could have believed years ago that this were possible unless he had seen the truth recorded in this scripture that there will be four world empires, only four world empires before Jesus Christ comes.

Not even the labor movement of our time, which at the present looms largest in the horizon, not even this labor movement will be able to falsify the word of God: "Four kingdoms and then the Son of Man." This is the teaching of Daniel, this is the teaching of the Revelation. This is the hope of the church in these days when there are wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes in divers places, men's hearts failing them for fear; saints should lift up their heads for now their redemption is nearer than when they first believed.

The Two Final Battles

There are two great world struggles mentioned in the Revelation. The account of the first is found in the sixth chapter under the outpouring of the sixth bowl, verses twelve to sixteen, and the second is mentioned in chapter twenty, verses eight and nine. The first is called the battle of Armageddon, the second the battle of Gog and Magog against the saints and the beloved city.

Bible students are not agreed respecting either of these struggles, or if there be agreement it is that we cannot be absolutely sure as to what is intended by them. There are, however, a few facts which seem clear and possibly the consideration of these will help us to get further on in our study.

The battle of Armageddon occurs during the tribulation period. That whole time, as we have before seen, is filled with wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes. It will be a time of trouble such as the world has never known. The battle of Armageddon is one of the great struggles included in this period. It takes place after the seven seals have been broken and the seven trumpets have sounded and the six bowls have been poured out.

Evidently, therefore, this struggle comes toward the close of the seven years of tribulation. The war with Gog and Magog comes after the seventh bowl has been poured out, after the beast and false prophet have been cast into the lake of fire, after the star-like angel has bound the dragon and sealed him up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years. For some reason which the Holy Spirit does not in any way explain, after the thousand years of peace and righteousness, the godless governments gone, the Christless religions like Mohammedanism and Freemasonry destroyed, after the long imprisonment of the dragon, that old serpent, the Devil and Satan, who had formerly free ingress and egress even among the saints of God—after all these stupendous events, this powerful, malignant, desperate king of the demons is freed from his prison.

The Last Great Battle

One would suppose that the great tribulation and the thousand years of the reign of the Word of God would have absolutely cured men of the tendency to rebel against God. It is one of the proofs of the divine character of

the Bible that it takes no time at all to answer questions like this. Why should men, after such experience believe it possible to sin and be safe?

The record simply is that Satan is able to deceive them. He gathers them to battle against the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and while they are thus assembled to make war, fire leaps down from heaven and devours them, and then the devil who deceived them is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown a thousand years before.

We have now made a little progress as regards these two great battles. The parties to them are the same. Satan and his host war against the saints and the holy city. The times differ. In the battle of Armageddon there are not only demons and saints in conflict, but on the side of the demons there are kings of the earth. But at the battle of Gog and Magog there are no kings of the earth. Godless authority ended with the destruction of the beast and the false prophet who were cast into the lake of fire a thousand years before, so that in the battle of Gog and Magog the parties on the side of evil are Satan and evil men, but no evil organizations are mentioned.

We are further to note that at the battle of Armageddon the hosts of God seem to consist of men, whereas in the battle of Gog and Magog men are not present, but when the hosts of Satan have gathered about the beloved city and the camp of the saints, fire leaps down from heaven and devours them, and this whirlwind of fire carries them into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet have been a thousand years. This is, as far as the Revelation teaches us, the end of Satan and his work in this world.

XVII

THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM

(Chapters 21 and 22)

THE last two chapters in this wonderful book tell us the story of the world and the church after the millennial age. Armageddon will be fought at the end of the tribulation and just before the millennial reign begins. Then will come the destruction of the beast and the false prophet and their followers, that is, godless government and Christless religions will be consumed; Satan will be bound, Christ will assume His throne, and His saints will reign with Him according to their faithfulness, one over ten cities, one over five, and so following.

After the thousand years of peace and happiness have ended, Satan will be loosed out of his prison for a little time. He will be able to deceive a certain number of persons; together with them he will make war on the saints and on the earthly Jerusalem, the seat of the throne of David, the center of millennial power.

He and his host will be destroyed as in a whirlwind of fire; he and his followers, those who have been deceived by him after the millennial reign is over, will be cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet were cast a thousand years before, and this will be the end of Satan and bad government and Christless religions. This is a restatement of the truths which have been heretofore mentioned but which because of their importance are entitled to this review.

The World After Gog and Magog

It is evident that the nature of the earth, of the beasts of the earth and of the men are different in the millennial age from what they have hitherto been. The earth itself has had burned out of it the seeds of sin and strife which were implanted at the fall of our first parents. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (Isaiah 55:13).

The eleventh of Isaiah gives us a revelation of the change in the character of wild beasts. Animals which were created subject to man, which became enemies to man when sin entered the world, will again become lovingly obedient to the human race. Fierce and terrible beasts will be led by little children and will not harm them. The loosing of Satan and the deceiving of a part of the human race will not, so far as we are informed, work any change in this respect.

The majority of men and all the institutions of men will retain, as far as we can learn, their holy character. There is no mention of beasts, no mention of harlots, or false prophets; the sum total of evil in that post-millennial struggle is ascribed to Satan and those who are deceived by him. There is no mention even of evil angels; that dark and terrible day seems to be given exclusively to the dragon, that old serpent, the Devil and Satan, and men whom he deceives; these together, Satan as captain and wicked men as followers, make war on the saints and beloved city, the earthly Jerusalem, which is the capital of the millennial kingdom, the seat of the throne of David, and as we have said before, in this instance the battle is not by the saints against the wicked, but fire comes down from God out of heaven and destroys them. Satan and all who remain adherents of his helpless cause

disappear in the lake of fire and we see them no more forever.

What of Schools in Millennium

Many of the Lord's people are interested to know what will be the fate of institutions during the millennial age. There is no Scripture teaching which warrants us in affirming that men will then be substantially different from what they are now, save and except in the matter of sin alone. Of course, when there is no godless government, but when Christ and His saints reign and when there is no false religion, but true worshippers worship the Lord in spirit and in truth, there will not be need for many institutions which exist at the present time as protests against evil.

There will be no need of temperance societies for there will be no liquor trade; there will be no need for mission organizations for all men will know the Lord from the least to the greatest. The world will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters fill the sea. There will be no need of societies for the protection of women and children, for there will be no one to wish or do them harm; there will be none to oppress the weak or the unfriended in the day when all authority is in the hands of Jesus Christ and His saints.

There will be need for schools, for children in the thousand years will be born limited in knowledge as they are now. The schools will be able to accomplish vastly more in those days than in our time, for there will be no hindering causes, no children suffering from insufficient nutrition, no children cursed by the vices of their fathers, no children compelled to toil unseasonably because their parents spend what should buy bread for strong drink or at the gambling table.

There will be the same need for churches than as there is now. The work will be different, but the need will

remain. Churches in those days will be places where men assemble for communion with God and the offering of praise. They will probably be far more beautiful and magnificent than they are in this age, for men will love God and love the place where His name is recorded. They will have abundant means, for vices have always consumed the estates of men more than any other one thing, and when men love God and one another it will be natural for them to create magnificent temples with magnificent musical arrangements where crowding thousands with shining faces will gather to sing the praise of God, to sing the praises of Jesus Christ who redeemed them with His precious blood.

It will be a glorious day and every saint who is seeking to live faithfully in this day of Christ's rejection should look forward to that time with great hope and joy and thanksgiving. It will be a wonderful age, a wonderful world and those who have been true to Jesus Christ will have each one his share in the splendors of that triumph.

What Will Be After Millennium?

Everything that we know on this subject is recorded for us in the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of this wonderful book. Repeatedly John says that he saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. He goes forward to speak of its magnificence, its foundations of precious stones, its gates of single pearls, its streets paved with gold, its rivers crystal clear, its trees ever in leaf and ever-bearing fruit, its inhabitants all holy, no sinful malignant beings, no Satan to tempt, no godless governments to oppress, no harlot religions to deceive.

If we gather together all that we know of the holy and beautiful and assemble these ideas, we have something like what the Holy Spirit describes this marvelous city

to be. Before taking up a question which is most interesting but which we can probably never definitely answer, I call your attention to the relation which this holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, sustains to the church age in which you and I are living.

We are told that this city had twelve foundations and that in these twelve foundations were the names of the twelve apostles. We are not told who takes the place of Judas in this list. Personally, it is my conviction that we shall find the name of Paul there, but we are not told and though the election of Matthias was not ordered and does not seem to have been approved, still it may have been. It is not explicitly disapproved, possibly we shall find him recorded with the eleven, but the thought upon which I wish your minds to rest is that the names of the apostles were in the foundations of the city.

We are further told that the twelve gates through which men entered into the city, gates which are not closed by day or by night, bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. I think we have here a fact which thoughtful persons should meditate. Since the twelve tribes preceded in the order of time the twelve apostles, why should the names of the twelve apostles be in the foundations of the city, while the names of the twelve tribes are applied to the gates?

Would not a human being, writing on this subject according to his own mind, have said that the foundations carried the names of the tribes and the gates the names of the apostles? This seems to me evident and yet we find the facts as they are. And when we meditate these facts I think that we can all see that the record corresponds with what must have been the order in reason, for the kingdom of God is founded upon the truth of Jesus Christ, His character as God man, suffering for men, becoming realized in the lives of men, this is the divine truth as to the beginning of the kingdom of God.

but the gates into this city were opened by the twelve tribes.

They first received in shadow the teaching which to us is clearly made known. It is therefore evident that if we had been sufficiently informed we would have adopted the order which the Holy Spirit has chosen, the foundations of this city are laid in the truth of Jesus Christ proclaimed by His apostles; the entrance to this city through which the nations have come was by the teaching committed to the twelve tribes, so the gates are named from Israel and the foundations from the apostles of the Lamb.

Where Is This Holy City, New Jerusalem, To Be?

The record is that John saw it coming down from God out of heaven. Our minds naturally question whether he saw it coming down *to* the earth and having a place here *on* the earth, or whether he saw it coming down to some point *near* the earth. We see the falling star. We do not see it strike the earth. Ordinarily when it strikes the atmosphere it is consumed. But this glorious city, shining not with the light of sun or moon or stars, but with the light of God, needing no other light, this bride, the Lamb's wife, comes down from God out of heaven.

If it comes to the earth that would seem to be a reason for supposing the earth to continue and to continue as the abode of saints and angels, for we read of this magnificent city, that the nations bring their glory and their honor unto it. If, on the other hand, this holy city comes down near the earth, but not to the earth, if it has its place in space and not upon the surface of the earth, then the saints and the angels may freely come and go, the nations of the earth may bring their glory and honor unto it; but it would seem to leave the question as to the eternity of the earth in a different state.

Of course, in all cases where there is not a clear and definite statement respecting the future, we are shut up

to the best judgments we can form and each man has a right to his own judgment, provided he holds it modestly and with due regard to the similar right which other people have to their opinions. With this understanding and without attempting to dogmatize in regard to this matter, I give the best judgment which up to this time I am able to form.

It is my belief that the holy city, New Jerusalem, which comes down from God out of heaven, is what we should call a supernatural starry existence and is not part and parcel of the earth. I incline to the belief that the earth itself is not to be eternal, but having been created as a holy abode for sinless beings who thereafter sinned but were redeemed and were so redeemed that not only they but their dwelling place was also once more sanctified, and this home of God's saints having been thus purged and having for a thousand years contained the throne of Jesus Christ, the throne of His father David, will thereafter cease to be the particular dwelling place of any particular number of God's people.

If it should happen that this world is to perish as other worlds have, it would not surprise me. That it may continue indefinitely everyone must admit, but this holy city, New Jerusalem, which comes down from God out of heaven, bears tokens of an eternal being.

I will not declare that this is true, for God may change the dwelling places of His people in the future, as He has in the past, but I incline to the opinion that this city, the dwelling place of God our Father, the dwelling place of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, the centre whence will go forth throughout the wide universe of God the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, the gathering place of the redeemed nations, the many who through the blood of Jesus have been purged from sin and made fit to dwell in the presence of the Most High, this city whose walls shine like battlements of precious stones, whose streets

gleam with the shining of the most precious metals which men know; it is my impression that this city is an eternal city and that while we see the redeemed nations passing in and out of its pearly gates we may think of them, our fathers, and mothers, our brothers and sisters, yes, and ourselves, redeemed by the blood of Jesus, as dwelling forever in this glorious home.

A Few Words In Conclusion

We have now reached the end of this study. I do not think that one of all my readers can be more conscious of its imperfections than am I, but it has been a help to me during these years past to read and think and pray about this book. I am sure that this is not only our privilege but that it is also our duty, and while there are many things about it which I do not understand, things which I should like to understand, things which I may yet understand, it is my impression that the points on which my mind has settled are substantially correct, and I believe that those who read and think and pray will find comfort, as I have, in this wonderful last book of the wonderful revelation of God.

Let me therefore return in mind to a few of these essential truths that we may find a comprehensive view of them as we lay aside the book. And, first, let us remember that we have here the final word respecting the person and work of Jesus Christ our Lord. The prophets began by telling us what He would do as a suffering sacrifice for the sins of men. The historians told us what He did do when He came as a suffering sacrifice for the sins of men. The Revelation tells us what He will do when He comes in the glory of His Father to take possession of the kingdom which is rightfully His. The prophets and historians tell us what the world was to do, did do to Him; the Revelation tells us what He will do to the world.

Second: In the beginning of the Bible we are told how Satan came into this world to mar and destroy the holiness and happiness which God had established. As the history of the kingdom of God goes forward the dark and deadly work of this enemy of God and man, and of those who are willing subjects to this adversary is continually in evidence.

Were it not for the Revelation we should never know what was the doom of this evil spirit, but in this book which we have been studying the end of his efforts and of his being is clearly set forth. He is to struggle even against God Himself. With shameless impudence and with desperate hate he accuses the saints before the very throne of God.

But while in former portions of the Bible it seems at times as if he might prevail, it becomes evident and grows increasingly so through the Revelation that he fights a losing battle. At last with his human helpers, disappointed and destroyed, he is apparently made the sport and ridicule of our Heavenly King.

An angel binds him with a chain, thrusts him into a pit, seals up the gate so that he cannot come forth for a thousand years and when loosed for a little season, and still malignant and determined as ever, he wages war against the saints of God and the beloved city, fire leaps down from the sky and sweeps him off into a fiery lake, after which we see him no more.

Third: This book not only gives us the glorious truth respecting the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, reveals Him with His many crowns and His mighty sword, not only shows us the overwhelming ruin which is to come upon Satan and his followers, but also gives to us a beautiful and final word as to the saints of the Most High.

The imperfections of God's people, as recorded in all portions of His Word, and imperfections of which we are personally conscious in our own lives, naturally tend

to dishearten. If we were shut up to what we see of good men and to what we know of ourselves when we struggle most successfully against evil, I think we should be discouraged.

But when we consider what God has revealed respecting our standing in Jesus Christ and respecting the future which we are to attain through faith in Him, the case is different. As the Revelation shows that Christ is to be exalted King over all, crowned with many crowns, as it shows that Satan, proud, resplendent with his scarlet robes and his costly jewels is to become a miserable captive, at last thrown into the pool of fire, so it teaches us that the saints, ignorant and imperfect in themselves, but strong and wise and glorious in Jesus Christ, shall be glorified with Him. This book helps us to courage and self-respect. No man can believe that the saints are to occupy the position set forth in the Revelation without finding his heart upborne, his eyes uplifted.

In the fourth place, the book teaches us many things which all thoughtful people desire to know respecting the coming days. Do not all persons naturally question as to the future of the world in which we dwell? Whether it is to be as it is or different, or if different in what particulars? Here, and in related scriptures, we have the future of the world clearly described.

As sinners are saved by the blood of Jesus, so the world itself is to be purged by fire. The creation is to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption." The world is to become again what it was when God made it, "very good." And this world thus redeemed and glorified is to be inhabited by holy beings.

Jesus Christ is to occupy the throne of His father David; the saints, men and women like those who read these words, are to share this world empire with Him. The very earth is to be changed in its character, in its appearance so that sweet, fresh waters will go forth in-

habited by multitudes of living creatures where now rocks or deadly poisonous streams are found.

And fifth: While this state is thus glorious, it is not the last word which is to be spoken respecting the saints of God. For a thousand years Jesus is to reign with His saints in the world. After that Satan is to strike his last blow, fight his last battle, sustain his last and overwhelming defeat. Then will come the uncounted ages during which the saints shall possess the freedom of the universe of God.

The great city, New Jerusalem, will come down from God out of heaven. It is to our minds a visible representation of the eternal and glorious abode of God's people. It is not an earth in heaven, a millennial earth; it is a holy city, New Jerusalem, the bride, the Lamb's wife, coming down from God out of heaven. It is lighted and ruled by our Heavenly Father.

The Saviour who redeemed us from the power of sin and death and hell is to be our eternal shepherd. The vast hosts of sinless ones will come and go freely throughout its shining streets. The purified nations of the world will bring their glory and honor into it. Should not we, who have such hopes as these set before us, "be instant in season, out of season," "always abounding in the work of the Lord," forasmuch as we know that our "labor is not in vain in the Lord"?

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

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